Rashi on Ecclesiastes
רש"י על קהלת
merged
https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi_on_Ecclesiastes
This file contains merged sections from the following text versions:
-The Metsudah Five Megillot, Lakewood, N.J., 2001
-https://www.nli.org.il/he/books/NNL_ALEPH002162036

Rashi on Ecclesiastes

## Chapter 1

### Verse 1

The words of Koheles. Wherever it is stated, "the words of דִּבְרֵי," it introduces words or reproof. [For example,] "These are the words הַדְּבָרִים that Moshe spoke," 1 Devarim 1:1. [followed by,] "And Yeshurun became fat [and kicked]." 2 Ibid. 32:15. [Also,] "The words דִּבְרֵי of Amos," 3 Amos 1:1. [followed by,] "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan." 4 Ibid. 4:1. [Also,] "The words דִּבְרֵי of Yirmiyahu," 5 Yirmiyahu 1:1. [followed by,] "Ask now and see whether a male gives birth, etc." 6 Ibid. 30:6. [And finally,] "And these are the words דִּבְרֵי of Dovid," 7 II Shmuel 23:1. [followed by,] "But the wicked are all like thorns thrust away." 8 Ibid. 23:6. "The words דִּבְרֵי of Koheles" [is followed by,] "The sun rises... All the rivers flow into the sea." 9 Below, verse 5. He refers to the wicked as the "sun," the "moon," 10 Below, verse 7. and the "sea," which earn no reward. So it was taught in Sifre. I learned from there that the section deals with the wicked and he compares them to the rising sun, which ultimately sets. Addendum: Another explanation, "All the rivers flow into the sea." What is the meaning of this? This is stated concerning idolaters, the fools who prostrate themselves to the water thinking that it has substance because they see the Great Sea, into which all the rivers flow and it is not full, but they have no understanding that to the place where the rivers flow, they repeatedly go, for the water of the rivers that flow into the sea are the very same waters that already flowed; they flow from under the deep and flow above the surface until the sea and then flow again. Therefore, the rivers do not stop, and the sea is not full, and not because they have substance. End of addendum.
Koheles. [He was called Koheles] because he gathered [=קִהֵל much wisdom, 11 The term קהלת meaning gathering is in Devarim 33:4 where it states, "the gathering [קהלת] of Yaakov." (Metsudas Tzion) and similarly, elsewhere [Scripture] calls him, "Agur Bin Yokeh," 12 Mishlei 30:1. This is a reference to Shlomo, meaning the gatherer [אגור] of wisdom [בן] spewed out [יקה] the prophecy [המשא]. because he gathered אָגַר all the wisdom and spewed וַהֲקִיאָהּ it out, and some say that he would say all his words in public assembly [=13 .בְּהַקְהֵל Alternatively, he gathered together and clarified many conflicting views. (Metsudas Tzion)
King in Yerusholayim. The city of wisdom. 14 Shlomo is known by three titles. In Shir Hashirim 3:11 he is called King Shlomo, in Mishlei 1:1 he is called "King of Yisroel," and here he is called "King in Yerusholayim." The Gemara in Maseches Sanhedrin 20b, comments that his kingdom was diminished by the virtue of sin. He was first recognized universally as King Shlomo, after his sin he was King of Yisroel only, and then King of Yerusholayim alone. Alternatively, Sefer Koheles is replete with wisdom, therefore it states that its author reigned in "the

city of wisdom," thus he was exposed to much wisdom and his conclusions are worthy of great regard.

Verse 2

Vanity of vanities, said Koheles. Koheles complains about the entire seven days of creation, that it is all a vanity 15 Vanity is something empty of substance, it is zero. However, when combined with something of substance, such as Torah study, it adds value to it, in the same manner that a zero that is placed next to a number adds value to it. (Mashal Umlitzah) of vanities.
Vanity of. 16 הֶבֶל The numerical value [ gematria ] of 'הבל' is 37, corresponding to the 37 years of Shlomo's reign, considering his exile of three years. (Gra) is punctuated with a chataph patach, because it is in the construct state; i.e., the vanity of the vanities. Seven vanities [are mentioned], 17 הבל is one, הבלים [plural] are two, הבל is one, הבלים are two, and הבל is one, making a total of seven. corresponding to the seven days of creation.

Verse 3

What profit. [What] reward or gain. 18 Ordinarily, יתרון connotes "greater," as when comparing two parts or objects, one to another. (Sifsei Chachomim)
Beneath the sun. Instead [=19 תַּחַת Ordinarily, תחת means "under," but in this verse that definition would be difficult. Therefore, Rashi interprets תחת as "instead," as we find in Bereishis 30:15, "in exchange [תחת] for your son's duda'im." The Gemara in Maseches Shabbos 30b renders תחת as "after," and interprets the verse, that for his labor "after the sun" he realizes no profit, but for his labor "before the sun," i.e., in Torah, which existed before God created the world, there is profit. (Sifsei Chachomim) of the Torah, which is called light, 20 Mishlei 6:23. as it is stated, "and the Torah is light." 21 "For all his labor" should not be misconstrued to include even engaging in Torah study, because otherwise Scripture should have stated בכל עמל [=all labor], however it states בכל עמלו [=his labor], referring to his own personal physical labor. Thus, one should labor in the study of Torah. All the labor which he does instead of engaging in Torah study, what reward does it yield?

Verse 4

A generation passes away and [another] generation comes. As much as the wicked man toils and labors to oppress and to rob, he does not outlive his activities, for the generation passes on and another generation comes and takes away everything from his sons, as the matter is stated, "His children must appease the poor." 22 Iyov 20:10.
And the earth abides forever. But who are the ones who [cause the earth to] endure? The humble and low, who bring themselves down to the ground, as the matter is stated, "But the humble shall inherit the earth." 23 Tehillim 37:11. 24 Alternatively, unlike generations, that when one passes by, another one comes, the earth does not change. But Midrash Tanchuma states, that all the righteous of Yisroel are called earth [=אֶרֶץ, as it is stated, "for you will be a desirable land." 25 Malachi 3:12.

Verse 5

The sun rises, etc. A generation passes on and a generation comes, as the sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening, 26 The connective vav in 'וזרח' demonstrates the connection with the previous verse of

generations passing by. and it goes throughout the night, yearning to return to the place from where it rose yesterday, that it will rise from there also today.

Verse 6

The wind. The sun's desire, 27 Ordinarily רוח means wind, but because the "sun" is the subject of this verse, Rashi defines רוח as "desire" or "will," i.e., the sun's desire. (Sifsei Chachomim) talent in O.F., as in, "toward wherever there was the will הָרוּחַ to go." 28 Yechezkeil 1:12.
And upon its circuits [the wind] returns. Also tomorrow, the entire circuit and encircling that it went around yesterday, it encircles and goes around today. 29 The expression הולך [goes] is used for moving toward the south [symbolic of wisdom] and סובב [goes round, circles] is used for moving toward the north [symbolic of wealth]. הולך denotes going without purpose whereas סובב implies a determined action. Koheles hints that man pursues wisdom with indifference, whereas his pursuit of wealth he does with great effort and determination. (Toldos Aharon)
It [the wind] goes toward the south. Always by day.
And it turns about toward the north. Always by night.
Round and round goes [the wind]. To the eastern and western sides, which it sometimes goes through by day, and sometimes circles at night. In Tammuz it goes through them, and in Teves it circles around them. Also the wicked, no matter how much their sun rises, they will ultimately set. No matter how much they gain power, they will ultimately return to their stench. From filth they came, and to filth they will return. And so —

Verse 7

All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is not full. Because they do not remain therein, for the ocean is higher than the entire world, as it is stated, "He summons the waters of the sea and pours them, etc." 30 Amos 5:8. Now from where does a person pour? From above downward, and the rivers flow in the tunnels under the mountains from the ocean and flow repeatedly, 31 They continue this cycle perpetually. and this is [the meaning of], "to the place where the rivers flow, there they continue [to flow]." Also, the wicked man, wherever he came from, so he will go.

Verse 8

All things lead to weariness, etc., the eye is not satisfied [with seeing], nor the ear filled [with hearing]. This refers back to, "What profit [does man have]," 32 Above, verse 3. if he exchanges the study of Torah to engage in idle talk? They are wearying, and he will not be able to acquire them all, and if he comes to indulge himself visually, his eyes will not be satisfied, and if he seeks aural satisfaction, his ears will not be gratified. 33 Rashi translates דברים as "words." Alternatively, דברים means "things," i.e., "all things lead to weariness." (Metsudas Dovid)

Verse 9

That which has been is what will be, etc. In whatever he learns, in a matter that is an exchange for the sun, there is nothing new. He will see only that which already was, which was created in the six days of creation. 34 It is interesting to note that the Tiferes Yehonasan explains the verse dealing with the generation of separation in Bereishis 11:3, "ונלבנה לבנים [let us make bricks]," that the people attempted to build rocket ships [moon=לבנה] and venture into outer space. But one who engages in the study of Torah constantly finds new insights therein, as

the matter is stated, "her breasts will satisfy you at all times." 35 Mishlei 5:19. Just as this breast, whenever the infant feels it, he finds a taste in it, so are the words of Torah, and likewise we find in Maseches Chagigah, 36 See Maseches Eiruvin 54b where the foregoing is discussed. However, the account of Rabbi Eliezer son of Horkenos does not appear in Maseches Chagigah. that Rabbi Eliezer son of Horkenos said things that the ear had not heard, concerning the account of the "Celestial Chariot."

Verse 10

Sometimes there is a thing. That comes to your hand under the sun about which the speaker will tell you, "See, this is a new thing!" But it is not new, for it has already been so for ages that have passed before us, only "there is no remembrance of earlier generations." 37 Below, verse 11. Therefore, it appears to be new.

Verse 11

Also of the later generations that are to come. After us, will have no recollection in the generations that will be after them. And the Midrash Aggadah expounds this as referring to the obliteration of Amaleik's remembrance, [whose remembrance] will ultimately be obliterated, as it is stated, "and the house of Eisav will have no survivor." 38 Ovadyah 1:18.

Verse 12

I, Koheles, have been king. Over the whole world, and later, over Yisroel, and then, over Yerusholayim alone, and finally, over my staff, 39 See Maseches Sanhedrin 20b. for it says, "[I] have been king... in Yerusholayim," but now, I am no longer king. 40 Koheles exemplifies the absurdity of being proud, regardless of one's position in society. For time gives rise to many changes; Koheles went from reigning over the whole world to being dethroned.

Verse 13

And I applied my heart to search. In the Torah, which is wisdom, and to ponder over it concerning all the evil deeds mentioned above, which are committed under the sun, and I pondered over it that it is a sore task that the Holy One, Blessed Is He, set before mankind. "The life and the good, and the death and the evil." 41 Devarim 30:15.
An evil thing. They have evil behavior.
To be afflicted with. To behave with it. "עִנְיָן" may be interpreted as an expression of an abode [=מָעוֹן and a dwelling, and it may also be interpreted as an expression of study [=עִיּוּן and thought, and the same applies [for the interpretation of] לַעֲנוֹת בּוֹ.' 42 Alternatively ' לענות בו' means "to be afflicted with." (Metsudas Tzion)
God has given. Has placed before them. 43 And they have been given the freedom to choose [=בחירה].

Verse 14

And vexation of spirit. The breaking [=וְרַעוּת of the spirit, 44 Alternatively, ורעות רוח means, "and a grasping [from רעה] after wind," i.e., man's effort is as hopeless as trying to catch the wind. as in, "Shatter רֹעוּ, O peoples, and be devastated." 45 Yeshayahu 8:9. "רוּחַ" is talent in O.F. At the end of the deed it becomes heartache.

Verse 15

That which is crooked. During his lifetime, will not be able to be straightened after he dies. Whoever toiled on the eve of Shabbos will eat on Shabbos. 46 See Maseches Avodah Zarah 3a. And our Sages explained this as referring to one who had illicit relations with a woman and begot a mamzer, or to a Torah scholar who abandoned the Torah, [i.e.,] he was originally straight, and became crooked. 47 See Mishnayos Chagigah 1:7. Another application of this verse is in reference to a person who failed to recite Shema or Tefillah in their respective required time periods; in Maseches Berachos 26a.
And that which is wanting cannot be counted. The one who excluded himself from the group, 48 I.e., that was formed to perform a mitzvah; see Maseches Berachos 26a. cannot be counted with them to share their reward.

Verse 16

I said to myself. Now that I have sunk from my greatness, I speak to myself, saying, "Who would have said about me that I would come to such a state?" Behold, I have grown, etc.

Verse 17

And I applied my heart, now, to know the nature of wisdom, what its end is, and the nature of madness and folly.
Madness. Dullness and confusion of thoughts, an expression of mixing, as in, "diluted סָהוּל with water." 49 Yeshayahu 1:22.
And folly. Foolishness. 50 שִׂכְלוּת has the same meaning as if it were spelled סִכְלוּת [=foolishness], as in, "and to grasp foolishness [סִכְלוּת]" in 2:3 and as in, "and madness and foolishness [סִכְלוּת]" in 2:12 below.
I understand now, that also wisdom has frustration in it, for in great wisdom, a person relies on his great wisdom and does not distance himself from the prohibition, and much vexation comes to the Holy One, Blessed Is He. I said, "I will get many horses, but I will not return the people to Egypt," but ultimately, I returned. I said, "I will take many wives, but they will not turn my heart away," but it is written about me, "his wives swayed his heart." 51 I Melachim 11:4. And similarly it states that he relied on his great wisdom and did many things, as it is stated, "the words of this man to Isieil, because God is with me, I will be able." 52 Mishlei 30:1.

Chapter 2

Verse 1

I said to myself. Since that is so, I will refrain from wisdom, and I will indulge in drinking.
I will try. אַנַסֶּכָּה is an expression of mixing wine [=מֶסֶךְ to drink, 1 Alternatively, אנסכה means "I will test [=נסה]." (Metsudas Tzion); or "I will govern [=נסיך]." (Sforno) as in, "she mixed her wine," 2 Mishlei 9:2. the mixing of wine with water to improve it or the mixing of spices with wine for create a spiced wine.
And enjoy the good life. וְרְאֵה is the same as וְרְאוֹת [=to enjoy]. 3 I.e., וראה is not a command. ( Sifsei Chachomim )
And behold, this too was vanity. For I saw prophetically that much evil is caused by lighthearted frivolity, [e.g.,] Belshatzar died as a result of a banquet, [and] the people of the generation of the flood were inundated because of the abundant goodness that You bestowed upon them.

Verse 2

Of laughter I said it is senseless. Mixed with cries and sighs. 4 Alternatively, 'מהוללי' means praiseworthy [=הלל], referring to the joy and delight awaiting the righteous in the World to Come, which is indeed praiseworthy. See Maseches Shabbos 30b.
And of joy, what does it [accomplish]? [What] good is it if it ends in grief.

Verse 3

I searched in my heart. I repeatedly searched in my heart to grasp them all, partying, wisdom, and folly, and to stimulate and to pamper my body by imbibing in wine. Every luxurious banquet is referred to as wine [=יין.
And my heart conducted itself with wisdom. Even if my body is imbibed with wine, my heart conducted itself with wisdom and Torah observance.
And to grasp foolishness. To things that appear foolish to me, concerning which I said, "Because God is with me, I will be able," 5 Mishlei 30:1. for example, the [prohibition against] wearing sha'atnez and having mingled species in a vineyard, which Satan and the nations of the world are critical of, and so it states, "It is best to take hold of one," 6 Below 7:18. and also, regarding Shaul, in whose eyes it seemed foolish to kill both man and woman, infant and suckling, but it was the commandment of the Omnipresent, and he called it foolishness!

Verse 4

I made great works. In the days of my greatness.

Verse 5

Every kind of fruit tree. For Shlomo with his wisdom recognized the veins of the earth, which vein goes to Cush, and there he planted peppers [which normally does not grow in Eretz Yisroel]; which one goes to a land of carobs, and there he planted carob trees. For all the veins of the lands come to Tzion, from where the world was founded, as it is stated, "Out of Tzion, the perfect beauty." 7 Tehillim 50:2. Therefore, it is stated, "every kind of fruit tree." [This is found] in Midrash Tanchuma. 8 The Gemara in Maseches Bava Kamma 82b states that it is forbidden to plant gardens and orchards in Yerusholayim. Apparently that is what prompted the Targum for this verse to describe that the boundaries for these plants and orchards were from "the wall of Yerusholayim until the banks of the water of Shiloach." (Gishmei Bracha)

Verse 6

Pools of water. בְּרֵכוֹת is] similar to ponds for fish, which are dug into the ground.

Verse 7

Verse 8

And treasures of kings. The treasures of the kings, gold, silver and precious stones, which the kings collect in their treasure houses.
And provinces. The treasure of all merchants.

Singers and musical instruments. Various types of musical instruments. 9 See Maseches Gittin 68a. According to Rashi, שָׁרִים וּשָׁרוֹת are various types of musical instruments. Alternatively, שָׁרִים וּשָׁרוֹת are male singers and female singers respectively.
Chests and chests of them. Beautiful coaches, covered wagons, a term used in the Gemara, "a coach שִׁדָּה, a chest and a closet." 10 Mishnayos Keilim 18:3. 11 Alternatively, שִׁדָּה וּשְׁדוֹת refers to a harem, i.e., women taken forcefully [שדד=plunder]. (Ibn Ezra)

Verse 9

Also my wisdom. Also, 12 Alternatively, אַף means "anger" and the verse is translated as, "only the [Torah] wisdom that I acquired through exertion [אף] is what remained with me." The Gemara in Maseches Berachos 63b and in Maseches Eiruvin 54a indicates that the study of Torah during trying times is most commendable and will result in great success and will not soon be forgotten. Or, unlike some preachers who do not practice what they preach, I, says Koheles, internalized and conducted my life [עמדה לי] according to what I preached. (Yismach Moshe) I did not forsake my wisdom because of all these affairs, and it remained with me and I did not forget it. Another explanation, it stood by me to aid me against all these.

Verse 10

I did not deny. I did not distance myself to separate from them, and similarly, "and He held back some of the spirit [that was upon him] and he gave it unto... the elders," 13 Bamidbar 11:25. like a candelabrum from which many candles are kindled, and none of its light is diminished. And this was my portion [reward]. And after doing all these, I have nothing more than this. Rav and Shmuel, one says, his staff, and one says, his cup. 14 See Maseches Sanhedrin 20b. The Gemara in Maseches Eiruvin 21b states that Shlomo established eiruvei chatzeiros [a procedure which allows carrying in courtyards on Shabbos] and netilas yodayim [ritual washing of one's hands before eating]. Accordingly, מִקְלוֹ [=his staff] alludes to eiruvei chatzeiros and קִיתוֹ [=cup] alludes to netilas yodayim. (R' Eliyahu Greiditzer) מַקֵּיתָה is an earthenware cup, from which people drink. 15 See Rashi in Maseches Sanhedrin 20b. Others in the Midrash Aggadah interpret the entire section as referring to study halls, students, and synagogues.
The forest growing with trees. The ignorant people, for working in fields and vineyards. 16 This Rashi on verse 6 appears to be out of place. Some texts treat the caption as part of Rashi narrative, i.e., that "the Midrash Aggadah interprets the entire section... and synagogues, and the forest growing with trees [refers to] the ignorant people, etc." ( Sifsei Chachomim )

Verse 11

Then I looked. Now at all my deeds, and I see that there is no benefit in them, for from all of them I am lacking. 17 I.e., they do not yield the eternal benefit I had expected of them.

Verse 12

I [then] turned my attention to behold wisdom. I turn away from all my affairs to delve into Torah, and madness and folly, [i.e.,] the punishment for transgressions.
For what value is the man who would come after the king. To supplicate him concerning a decree that they decreed upon him, and they already

executed the decree and it is already in effect. It is better for him to consider at first his actions, and he would not find it necessary for him to appeal.

Verse 13

Over foolishness. That is wickedness. 18 The analogy of wisdom and foolishness to light [אור] and darkness [חשך] can be explained that אור is an all inclusive term which can mean day or night, but חשך refers to night only. See Maseches Pesachim 2a-b. Similarly, a wise person, when the situation calls for it, can act in a foolish manner [as Dovid did when he escaped from Avimelech], whereas a foolish person cannot act as a wise person. (R. Leibish Charif)

Verse 14

The wise man, his eyes are in his head. In the beginning [=בְּרֹאשׁוֹ of the matter, he contemplates the end results. 19 Note the similarity to "Who is wise? He who visualizes what the future holds," in Maseches Tamid 32a.
But I also understood. Also, I [know], who praise the wise man over the fool, I know that they both will die.

Verse 15

And I said to myself, etc. I.e., since they will both die, perhaps I will think in my heart from now on that as it happens to the wicked man, so will it happen to me, so why should I be more righteous?
Then I said to myself. That if I will think so, that is vanity, for the remembrances of the wise man and the fool are not equal. After their deaths, both of them will not be remembered together, for this one will be remembered for good, and this one will be remembered for evil.

Verse 16

Since in the days to come all will be forgotten. Because I see the wicked who already lived, and who were very successful, and in the days that came after them, all their power and their success were forgotten.
And how can the death of the wise man be [like the death] of the fool. I observe the righteous succeeding in their deaths and availing their children, for example, "And I will remember My covenant with Yaakov, etc.," 20 Vayikra 26:42. [and] "I remember for you the kindness of your youth." 21 Yirmiyahu 2:2.

Verse 17

And [so] I hated life. He was prophesying about the generation of Rechovam, who were wicked [people]. 22 During Rechovam's reign, ten tribes defected and joined forces with him.

Verse 18

Verse 19

This too is vanity. This too is one of the vanities that were created in the world, that the wise man labors, and the fool inherits him.

Verse 20

And [so] I turned my heart to despair. Neither to toil nor to labor.

Verse 21

For there is a man. Its interpretation is according to its plain meaning. But the Midrash Aggadah in Tanchuma interprets it as an allegorical reference to the Holy One, Blessed Is He, concerning Whom it is stated, "and upon the likeness of the throne there was a likeness like the appearance of a man." 23 Yechezkeil 1:26.
Who labored with wisdom. As it is stated, "Adonoy founded the earth with wisdom... with His knowledge the depths were split," 24 Mishlei 3:19-20.
and to the creatures who had not labored in it, He left a share in it. 25 This can be referring to a situation where one publicly shamed his friend, that according to our Sages his friend receives his share in Gan Eiden. (Kehilas Yaakov). Or, as the Gemara Maseches Chagigah 15a states that God created for every person a portion of Gan Eiden and a portion of Gehinnom, and when a wicked person fails to earn his portion in Gan Eiden, it is given to a righteous person in addition to his own portion that he earned.
This too is vanity and a great evil. And they became a generation of vanity and "the wickedness of man was great upon the earth," 26 Bereishis 6:5. The text in Bereishis which is referring to the generation of the flood, states "כי רבה רעת האדם" which is similar to the wording of this verse "ורבה רעה" [and a great evil]. in the generation of the flood.

Verse 22

For what has, etc. For what advantage does man gain from all his toil and frustration he endures with [his] labor and worry, which he toils, and ultimately leaving [his possessions] to others.

Verse 23

His lot. His custom.
This too. Is one of the vanities that prevail in the world.

Verse 24

Is it not beneficial for man. This is a question, "that he eat and drink and shows himself content?" i.e., "he guides his heart to perform justice and righteousness with the food and drink, and so it was stated to Yehoyakim, "Did not your father eat and drink and practice justice and righteousness and then it was well with him?" 27 Yirmiyahu 22:15.

Verse 25

For who should eat, etc. Why should I not rejoice with my portion in food and drink? Who deserves to eat what I toiled for, and who will hurry to swallow it, except me?
If not I. Except me. This is the trait of the wicked, who hoard [their possessions] for others.

Verse 26

For to the man who is good in His sight. Before God, mentioned above, "that it is from the hand of God." 28 Above, verse 24.
He gives wisdom, knowledge and joy. A heart [i.e., intellect] to engage in Torah [study] and in [fulfilling] the commandments and to rejoice in his portion of eating, drinking, and [donning] clean clothing.

But to the sinner He gives the urge. A habit and concern to hoard and gather, and to give to him who is good before God, as the matter is stated, “and Esther put Mordechai in charge of Haman’s estate.” 29 Esther 8:2.
This too. Is one of the vanities that were given to the creatures, that they labor, and someone else takes.

Chapter 3

Verse 1

For everything there is a season. Let not one who accumulates possessions out of vanity rejoice, for although he possesses them now, they will ultimately pass on to the righteous, only the time has not yet arrived, for everything has a set time 1 The word עת [=time] is repeated 29 times in this section, corresponding to the number of days in a lunar month. when it will be. 2 I.e., nothing is coincidental, rather there is a specific time for everything (Metsudas Dovid). Alternatively, one should not say that he has no time for Torah study or the performance of Mitzvos, because in reality לכל זמן, there is time for everything when, ועת לכל חפץ, if it is for an activity that he really desires [=חפץ], there is always time. (Kehilas Yaakov)
For everything. For every thing [=חֵפֶץ. All things דְּבָרִים are called “חֲפָצִים” in the language of the Mishnah.

Verse 2

A time to be born. At nine months.
And a time to die. The limit of the years of each generation.
A time to plant. A nation and a kingdom.
And a time to uproot. A time will come for it to be uprooted.

Verse 3

A time to kill. An entire nation, when the day of its visitation comes, as it is stated, “and he will slay your remnant [with the sword].” 3 Yeshayahu 14:30.
And a time to heal. Their ruin, as the matter is stated concerning Egypt, “and they will repent to Adonoy, and He will accept their prayer and heal them.” 4 Yeshayahu 19:22.
A time to wreck. The wall of the city, when it is decreed upon it, as it is stated, “and the wall of Yerusholayim is breached.” 5 Nechemyah 1:3.
And a time to build. As it is stated, “and I will build it up as in the days of old.” 6 Amos 9:11.

Verse 4

A time to weep. On the ninth of [Menachem] Av.
And a time to laugh. In the time to come, as it is stated, “Then our mouth will be filled with laughter.” 7 Tehillim 126:2.
A time to mourn. In the days of mourning.
And a time to dance. With bridegrooms and brides. 8 The Gra explains the reason why this verse does not have parallel structure, i.e., why is does not state עת לספוד ועת לרקוד, i.e., with a lamed as in the beginning עת לבכות ועת לשחוק. He says that it hints to the halachah stated in Maseches Kesuvos 17a, that on two occasions one interrupts his Torah study [= למד], lamed, to attend a wedding [רקוד] or to attend a funeral [ספוד].

Verse 5

A time to cast away stones. The youths of Yisroel scattered during the destruction of the Beis [Hamikdosh], as it is stated, "sacred gems are scattered." 9 Eichah 4:1.
And a time to gather them from the exile, as it is stated, "And Adonoy their God will save His people like sheep on that day, for the stones of the crown will be exalted over His land." 10 Zecharyah 9:16.
A time to embrace. [As it is stated,] "For, just as a belt is fastened, etc." 11 Yirmiyahu 13:11.
And a time to refrain from embracing. [As it is stated,] "And Adonoy will drive the people far away." 12 Yeshayahu 6:12.

Verse 6

A time to seek. As the matter is stated, "I will seek the lost," 13 Yechezkeil 34:16. concerning the scattered among Yisroel.
And a time to abandon. And a time when He causes them to perish in the exile, as it is stated, "And you will become lost among the nations." 14 Vayikra 26:38.
A time to preserve. [As it is stated,] "May Adonoy bless you and safeguard you," 15 Bamidbar 6:24. when you do His will.
And a time to discard. [As it is stated,] "And He cast them to another land." 16 Devarim 29:27.

Verse 7

A time to rip apart. The kingship of the House of Dovid, 17 When Bnei Yisroel act in an evil manner. [as it is stated,] "And I tore the kingship, etc." 18 I Melochim 14:8.
And a time to sew. [As it is stated,] "And they will become united in your hand;" 19 Yechezkeil 37:17. [and] "neither shall they be divided any longer into two kingdoms." 20 Ibid. Verse 22.
A time to be silent. These are the times when a person is silent and receives a reward, 21 E.g., when a person is insulted and yet remains silent. (Metsudas Dovid) as it is stated, "and Aharon was silent," 22 Vayikra 10:3. and he [therefore] merited that the Divine speech addressed him personally, as it is stated, "And Adonoy spoke to Aharon, [saying] 'Do not drink intoxicating wine.'" 23 Ibid. Verse 8.
And a time to speak. [As it is stated,] "Then Moshe sang," 24 Shemos 15:1. [and,] "And Devorah sang," 25 Shoftim 5:1. [and,] "Take words with you." 26 Hoshei'a 14:3.

Verse 8

A time to love. [As it is stated,] "And He will love you." 27 Devarim 7:13.
And a time to hate. [As] it is stated, "All their evil is in Gilgal; for there I hated them." 28 Hoshei'a 9:15.

Verse 9

What benefit [then] has the worker. What is the benefit of the one who does evil, in all that he labors? He too, his time will come, and all [his ill gotten gains] will be lost.

Verse 10

The matter. The behavior.
To be afflicted. To behave.

Verse 11

Beautiful in its time. In its proper time, it is beautiful that reward be given for good deeds, but at the time of evil, it is appropriate for meting out punishment for evil deeds. 29 Alternatively, "beautiful in its time," refers to God's provision of sustenance to all in a timely fashion (Sforno). Or, everything He made is "beautiful when used in its designated time." (Metsudas Dovid)
Even [a sense of] the external world He has set in their heart, etc. Also the wisdom of the world that He instilled into the hearts of mankind, He did not instill it all into each one's heart, rather a little to this one and a little to that one, in order that man should not fully grasp the workings of the Holy One, Blessed Is He, to know it; [and thereby] he will not know the day of his visitation [death] and on what he will stumble, in order that he put his heart to repent, so that he will be concerned and say [to himself], "Today or tomorrow I will die." Therefore, 'הָעֻלָּם' is written here defectively [i.e., without a ' vav '], an expression of "hidden," for if man knew that the day of his death was near, he would neither build a house nor plant a vineyard. 30 Alternatively, "העלם" means eternity and the verse is translated as "even a sense of eternity [העלם] He has set in their heart, etc." and therefore they act as if they will live forever. (Ibn Ezra) Therefore, he says that, "He has made everything beautiful in its time." The fact that there is a time for death is a beautiful thing, for a person optimistically says [to himself], "Perhaps my death is far off," and he builds a house and plants a vineyard; and it is beautiful that it is concealed from people. 31 Alternatively, העלם is referring to forgetfulness.

Verse 12

I know. Now, since the time of visitation [death] is concealed, that there is nothing better for man than to rejoice with his portion and to do that which is good in his Creator's eyes, while he is yet alive.

Verse 13

And enjoys the good. The Torah and the commandments.

Verse 14

I know that whatever [God] does. The Holy One, Blessed Is He, in the Creation, is fit to be eternal, and it cannot be changed, either by adding or by subtracting, and when it is changed, [it is because] God commanded and caused it to be changed, in order that they should fear Him. The ocean broke through its boundary in the generation of Enosh and inundated a third of the world, and God did this so that they would fear Him. Seven days, the course of the sun was changed in the generation of the flood, to rise in the west and set in the east, in order that they fear Him. [Also,] the sun went back ten degrees in the days of Chizkiyahu; and in the days of Achaz his father, the day was shortened and the night was lengthened on the day of his death, so that he should not be eulogized. All this was so that they would fear Him. 32 See the Gemara in Maseches Shabbos 31b which states that God created His world only that men should fear Him, i.e., that they should have awe and reverence for Him. Therefore, there is nothing better for a man to occupy himself with than with [fulfilling] His commandments and to fear Him.

Verse 15

That which already was. That which was before us, was already done, and we either saw it or heard it from others who saw it, and we can attest to it, for we saw that the Holy One, Blessed Is He, seeks the pursued. Yaakov was pursued, Eisav was a pursuer, [and Scripture states,] "And I loved Yaakov. But I hated Eisav." 33 Malachi 1:1-2. The Egyptians pursued Yisroel; the Egyptians drowned in the sea, and [Bnei] Yisroel were victorious.
And that which is. Destined to be at the end is a model of what already was. As it was in the beginning, so will it be at the end. The Holy One, Blessed Is He, does not change His standards [by which He sustains] the world.
And God seeks the pursued. To punish the pursuer. Therefore, what benefit is derived by one who does evil in what he labors? Ultimately he will have to pay [for it].

Verse 16

In the place of justice, etc. I saw with the Holy Spirit, the place of the Chamber of Hewn Stone in Yerusholayim, which was, "full of justice," 34 Yeshayahu 1:21. there they judge wickedly, as it is stated, "Her leaders judge for bribes," 35 Michah 3:11. and I saw their punishment.
And in the place of righteousness. The middle gate, which was the place where laws were established.
There was wickedness. There sat Sarsachim, the chief captain, Nergal Saretzer, the chief officer, and Nevuchadnetzar and his armies, 36 See Yirmiyahu 39:3. and they judged Yisroel with harsh tortures and death sentences.
There was wickedness. The accent mark is above [i.e., before the last syllable], indicating that it is a noun like [the preceding] 'הָרֶשַׁע [wickedness].' 37 Alternatively, הרשע is "the wicked person." (Targum) (It should have been vowelized with a segol under the resh, but since it is at the end of the verse, it is changed to be vowelized with a kamatz gadol, although we do not find another instance [of this word] 38 But we do find instances of other words that change, as in Shemos 21:24, it states "פצע תחת פצע [=a wound for a wound]," the pei of the first "פצע" is vowelized with a segol, and the pei of the second פצע is vowelized with a kamatz because of the esnachta. ( Sifsei Chachomim ) where it changes in the case of an esnachta or a sof pasuk ).

Verse 17

I said in my heart, etc. Therefore, I say everything is judged by the Holy One, Blessed Is He, in due time, and even though the matter [appears] delayed, it will eventually reach its time, for there is a time for everything, even for retribution and for the visitation of judgement there is a time that comes.
And for every deed that man did, they will judge him there when the time of the visitation arrives; there at that time, a time is given for every deed, to be judged for it. At the gate of the fold there are words, but in the stall are there is strict accounting. 39 See Maseches Shabbos 32a. The shepherd waits until the goats are by the gate of the fold, and then he rebukes and punishes them.

Verse 18

I said to myself. When I observed all this.
Concerning the state of man. Who adopted the trait of haughtiness, to exert rulership and superiority over those smaller than they.

[God] has set them apart. (Other texts: [God] should clarify for them. )
The Holy One, Blessed Is He, to notify them that their rulership is nought, and to show them and also the princes and the kings —
They themselves are as beast. Like other beasts and animals they are to themselves.

Verse 19

For the fate of men, etc. This is the reason for the matter, that the Holy One, Blessed Is He, gave a fate and a mishap to mankind, and there is a fate and a mishap to the beasts, and He gave one fate to them both, for just as this one dies, so does that one die.
And the superiority of man over beast is nil. And the superiority and the success of man over beast is not apparent after he dies, for everything is converted to nothingness by returning to the dust. 40 This is true when a person spends his life only in the accumulation of wealth. (Metsudas Dovid)

Verse 20

Verse 21

Who knows. As in, "Whoever knows, let him repent," 41 Yoel 2:14. [i.e., he] who understands, knows that "the spirit of man" ascends on high and stands in judgment, "and the spirit of the beast" descends to the earth, and does not have to give a justification and reckoning. 42 However, there are a very few who understand and know this distinction which differentiates the spirit of man from beast. (Metsudas Dovid)
[Therefore,] one must not behave like a beast which does not [have to] care about its deeds.

Verse 22

I perceived. In all of these.
That there is nothing better. For man.
That man should rejoice in his work. He should rejoice and eat in the toil of his hands, but not to widen his desire like the grave, to covet riches, to accumulate that which is not rightfully his.
For that is his lot. The toil of his hands, that is the portion given him from Heaven, and with it he should rejoice.
For who will bring him to see. After he dies, what his children will have; if they, too, will be successful with the wealth that he accumulated and left over for them, or whether they will not prosper. 43 Alternatively, for who will bring him to see the reward and punishment after death.

Chapter 4

Verse 1

And I returned and considered. By means of the Holy Spirit.
All the oppressions. Who were made to be oppressed in Gehinnom for the deeds that were committed. 1 Alternatively, one cannot rejoice in view of the injustice and robbery committed in the world. (Ibn Ezra)
Under the sun. תַּחַת [meaning] in exchange for the Torah. 2 See above 2:18.

And behold, tears of the oppressed. Weeping for their souls, which are oppressed in the hand of the destructive and cruel angels, and similarly it says, "Transgressors in the valley of weeping, transform it into a fountain," 3 Tehillim 84:7. these are the ones who descend to Gehinnom. And this verse too is expounded in this manner in Sifre.
And from the hand of their oppressors [flows the] power. Their oppressors overwhelm them and attack them with force.

Verse 2

Who already died. Before the evil inclination overpowered them to push them back from the Holy One, Blessed Is He, 4 Alternatively, I am able to determine the praise of those who died [ושבח אני את המתים], by observing the conduct and type of life style of their children who are alive [מן החיים]. (Yalkot Eliezer) like the early Patriarchs, 5 Rashi answers the apparent contradiction between this verse which praises the dead and below [9:4]. Koheles states "for a live dog is better than a dead lion." ( Sifsei Chachomim ) for Moshe was answered only through them [i.e., their merit]. 6 See Maseches Shabbos 30a. Moshe said many prayers and God did not answer, but when he mentioned the merit of the Patriarchs in his prayers, he was immediately answered. ( Sifsei Chachomim ) And like my father Dovid, for I was not answered with twenty-four praises 7 See Maseches Shabbos 30a. The Gemara there relates that the gates in the Bais Hamikdosh clung to each other when Shlomo attempted to place the Holy Ark into the Kodesh Hakadoshim. He said twenty-four expressions of entreaty and was not answered until he mentioned the kind deeds of Dovid. ( Sifsei Chachomim ) until I said, "Remember the kind deeds of Your servant Dovid." 8 II Divrei Hayomim 6:42.

Verse 3

Yet. Yet עדן' 9 .עֲדֵן=עֲדַיִן is a shortened version of עד הנה [=as yet]. (Ibn Ezra)
Who has not seen the [evil] deed. I saw in Midrash Koheles that these are the 974 generations that were decreed to be created, but were not created. 10 Of the one thousand generations that were decreed to be created before the giving of the Torah, 974 were not created. However, 26 generations after God created the world He gave the Torah. There were ten generations from Adam to No'ach, ten generations from No'ach to Avrohom, and six generations from Avrohom to Moshe. Thus 974 + 26 equals one thousand generations. See Rashi in Maseches Chagigah 14a.

Verse 4

And I observed that all labor. These are the sins, which are toil in the eyes of the Holy One, Blessed Is He.
And all skillful work. Which is not for the sake of Heaven, but for one's envy of his friend, both of which are vanity.
Is the result of man's envy. Which is the result of man's envy of his neighbor.

Verse 5

The fool. The wicked person. 11 Alternatively, "the fool." (Targum)
Folds his hands. And does not toil, and he eats only from robbery.
And eats his own flesh. On the Day of Judgement, when he sees the righteous bestowed with honor, while he is being judged. 12 Alternatively, because he did not toil, he eventually dies from starvation (Ibn Ezra); or בשרו refers to "his relatives" that suffer on

his account. See Rashi below 5:5 and also in Yeshayahu 58:7. It is expounded in this manner in Sifre.

Verse 6

Better is a handful [earned] in contentment. To acquire few possessions, but with his toil, so that his Creator should have satisfaction from them.
Than two handfuls [earned]. Many possessions [acquired] through sin, 13 Alternatively, the verse refers to giving charity, i.e., better a lesser amount given to a poor person but with a pleasant demeanor, than giving twice as much, but causing the poor man to feel uncomfortable. (Nachal Eshkol) which is toil and grief to the Omnipresent.

Verse 7

Under the sun. Is the same as, "under the heavens."

Verse 8

There is one who is alone with none other beside him. There is a person who does his work alone.
He has neither son nor brother. If he is Torah scholar, he neither acquires for himself a disciple, who is like a son, nor a companion, who is like a brother. And if he is a bachelor, he does not take a wife, to be to him like a brother, as a helper and to beget a son. And if he is a merchant, he does not acquire partners for himself, but he goes out on the road by himself.
Yet there is no end to his labor. He toils in study, and if he is a merchant, he labors in business.
Neither is his eye ever satisfied with riches. He will not be sated from the insights of Torah, for a person learns much Torah from his students, and regarding money, he constantly pursues money.
And for whom do I labor. Since I do not develop students, and I do not take a wife to beget children.

Verse 9

Two are better. In all aspects.
Than one. Therefore, a person should acquire for himself a companion and marry a woman, for they have a greater return in their labor. Much work is accomplished by two, because [there are tasks that] an individual would not start on his own.

Verse 10

For if they fall. [To be understood] according to its apparent meaning. And regarding Torah studies, if his studies are too difficult for him, his companion will review them with him, or if he errs and is not exact in what he heard from his teacher, his companion will set him on the truth[ful course]. 14 The Gemara in Maseches Berachos 63b states that Torah scholars who sit alone and engage in Torah study become foolish and will eventually sin [by erring].
But woe to him. But woe to him 15 .וְאוֹי לוֹ=וְאַי לוֹ Rashi renders this interpretation because ואילו is spelled 'full', i.e. with a yud. ( Sifsei Chachomim )

Verse 11

They can be warm. [To be understood] according to its apparent meaning, regarding male and female, who are aroused by one another and procreate. 16 Alternatively, these verses refers to the performance of a mitzvah, i.e., if each one performs a mitzvah on his own then if he slackens off, there is no one to encourage him and "uplift him." However, when two people perform a mitzvah together, it adds "warmth" to their performance of the mitzvah. (Divrei Avrohom)

Verse 12

And if an individual attacks. If thieves came to attack him, if they are two, they will stand up to them, and certainly, if they are three, "and the threefold cord is not quickly severed." Another explanation: Whoever is a Torah scholar, as well as his son and his grandson, the Torah will never cease from his seed, as [Scripture] states, "[My words] will not depart from your mouth nor from the mouth of your offspring nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring." 17 Yeshayahu 59:21. Another explanation: [And] "the threefold cord," [i.e., one well versed] in Scripture, Mishnah, and [having] good manners, will not quickly sin. It is expounded in the Midrash in other ways, "There is one who is alone with none other beside" 18 Above Verse 8. Him, but the sequence of all these verses does not correspond with their interpretations.

Verse 13

Better a poor but wise child. This is the good inclination, and why is it called "child"? Because it comes to a person only at the age of thirteen years. 19 Alternatively, this verse refers to Avrohom who had a Divine prophecy at the age of three years old and refused to bow before Nimrod's idols. (Targum)
Poor. Because the limbs do not obey it, as [they obey] the evil inclination. 20 According to Rashi that this verse is referring to the good inclination and evil inclination, the expression "better" is somewhat difficult, because "better" implies that both are "good" and one is "better" that the other, but what "good" can be attributed to the evil inclination. The Amtachas Binyomin therefore suggests that the first mem of מִמֶּלֶךְ does not mean "than" rather it means "as a result of", i.e., it is better to follow the good inclination "as a result of defeating, after a struggle, the evil inclination, as opposed to one who has not been exposed to the evil inclination, where the probability is a greater that he will be enticed.
Wise. Which gives a person intelligence to [follow] the right way.
Than an old and foolish king. This is the evil inclination, which rules over all the limbs. "Old," for when a child is born, it comes to him, 21 The evil inclination is referred to as "king" because all obey it, and "old" because it becomes part of man long before the good inclination. as it is stated, "sin rests at the opening." 22 Bereishis 4:7. And foolish. Because it misleads him in the way of evil. It is expounded in the Midrash in this manner.
Who no longer knows how to be vigilant. Because he has aged and no longer accepts reproof.

Verse 14

Even though he [the child] emerged from prison to be king. From the place of filth and stench [=סָרוּחִים, as Targum renders, 'וְאִתְבְּאַשׁ', "and it became putrid וּסְרִי."
Even though in his own kingdom. Since he reigned over man, the poor one was born; who was better than he, and who came out of purity, not out of the filth of the womb. So it was expounded in the Midrash. Another

explanation: “Better a poor but wise child, etc.” [to be understood] according to its apparent meaning, “[one] who no longer knows to be vigilant,” for he has already aged in his wickedness and foolishness. “Even though he [the child] emerged from prison to be king.” For the poor child; it will ultimately be said about him that he went out to reign from the midst of his affliction and from his prison cell, for the samech of סָּסוּרִים is punctuated without a dagesh, which is the equivalent of אֲסוּרִים. (Some editions: As in, “And no Arab will pitch יַהֵל his tent there,” 23 Yeshayahu 13:20. which is the same as “יְאַהֵל.”) For so we find that Yoseif reigned following his being freed from prison, and so Dovid, “I have taken you from the sheepcote, from following the flocks.” 24 II Shmuel 7:8.
Even though in his own kingdom he was born a pauper. For it is fitting and proper that he should reign, because even in his kingship, he changed from the tradition of the ruling class and he humbled himself to the sages, which is characteristic of the poor. And so, “and from [one who is like] a wild donkey, a man will be born,” 25 Iyov 11:12. [meaning,] that he will be changed and converted from what he was, resembling a wild donkey, and he will become a man.
He was born. יִוָּלֵד means] “becomes,” and it is in the present tense.

Verse 15

I observed that all the living, etc. I found in the Midrash of this Book, that this refers to the generation of the flood, about which it is stated, “And of every living thing.” 26 Bereishis 6:19.
Were supportive of the young successor. Who will exist instead of that generation, i.e., No’ach and his sons.

Verse 16

There was no limit to all the peoples. They were fruitful and multiplied too much, as it is stated, “their children are [well established] in their sight,” 27 Iyov 21:8. a woman would conceive and bear in three days, “They send out their infants [i.e., carefree] like sheep.” 28 Ibid. Verse 11.
To all of them whom he lead. There was no end to all the good that they had, but all was lost, and in an instant descended to the grave.
Even though [it is so now] those who come after [the next generation]. The generation of dispersion.
Will not rejoice. Also they, with the good that was given into their hands.
For this too. Its end is that of vanity and frustration, when a person follows his [evil] inclination.

Verse 17

Guard your foot when you go to the House of God. [“Watch”] how you go, if you bring a thanksgiving offering or a peace offering, that is good. 29 Alternatively, this verse refers to one’s behavior when entering the House of God, i.e., he should enter in a manner that reflects reverence for God; or, one should make sure that his shoes are clean before entering. But “watch” yourself that you should not have to go and bring sin offerings or guilt offerings.
Come near. To obey the words of the Holy One, Blessed Is He, and be good and near the Holy One, Blessed Is He.
Rather than offer sacrifices like the fools. That he should sin and bring a sacrifice.

For they do not know that they do evil. The fool does not realize that he is harming himself. 30 The fool thinks that it is okay to sin as long as he brings a sin offering. (Metsudas Dovid)

Chapter 5

Verse 1

To utter a word before God. To speak critically toward [God] above. 1 Alternatively, "do not let your heart be hasty" to voice complaints before God, "for He is in heaven and you are on earth," i.e., He alone knows what is good for you and whatever he does is for the best. See Maseches Berachos 61a and Maharsha there.
For God is in heaven and you are on earth. And even if the weak one is above, and the strong one below, the fear of the weak one is upon the strong one, how much more so when it is the strong one [=God] Who is above and the weak one who is below.

Verse 2

For a dream comes with many subjects. For it is usual for a dream to come because of the many thoughts upon which a person ponders and thinks during the day, and it is usual for the speech of a fool to come with excessive words, because by increasing his words, he utters foolishness from his mouth, for transgression is inevitable; therefore I say, "let your words be few." 2 Scripture in Mishlei [17:28] states, "even a fool who is silent will be considered wise, [and] when he seals his lips [he will be considered] understanding."

Verse 3

He has no desire in fools. The Holy One, Blessed Is He, has no pleasure in the wicked who vow and do not pay.

Verse 4

Verse 5

Do not permit your mouth. [By uttering] a vow.
To bring guilt on your flesh. That He should visit the iniquity upon your children. 3 According to Rashi, בשרך means children, as in, "and do not hide yourself from your kin [ומבשרך]," in Yeshayahu 58:7. Alternatively, it can be understood literally, i.e., do not let the vain vows made by your mouth to bring punishment upon your flesh [=yourself=בשרך]. See Maseches Shavuos 39a.
Nor say before the angel. The representative who comes to demand of you the charity that you publicly pledged. 4 Alternatively, "an angel of God" who keeps and records all of man's utterances (Ibn Ezra); or מלאך refers to "a Torah scholar" who is called upon to annul vows. (Sforno)
That it was an error. I pledged it in error, I thought that I would have the ability to give.
And destroy the work of your hands. [I.e.,] the commandments that were in your hands, that you had already performed, will cause them to be lost [=destroyed]. 5 Alternatively, מעשה ידיך refers to the "children" of one who fails to fulfill his vows, who die as a result. It is expounded in this manner in the Midrash.

By your voice. Because of your voice.

Verse 6

For in the multitude of dreams, etc. For all that they tell you — dreams, false prophets, and idle chatter — to separate from the Omnipresent.
Man should fear God. [The word] כִּי is an expression of "rather," [i.e.,] do not obey the dreams, rather, "fear God."

Verse 7

Oppression of the poor, perversion of justice and righteousness, etc. If you see in the province that they oppress the poor and deprive justice and righteousness.
Do not be astonished. About the will of the Omnipresent, when He exacts retribution upon them.
For One higher than the high watches. And sees their deeds, and there are higher ones 6 I.e., angels. over them who carry out the mission of the Omnipresent, and their hand is strong to punish them.
Perversion of justice. Deprivation of justice. Since it is in the construct [i.e., possessive] state, גֶּזֶל is vowelized with a small patach [= segol ], 7 Apparently Rashi's text is not like our edition where גזל is vowelized with a tzeireh. for were it not possessive, גָּזֶל would be vowelized with a kametz. Another explanation: If you see that they oppress the poor and deprive [them of] justice, and you see charity coming toward the city, [i.e.,] that the Holy One, Blessed Is He, lavishes goodness upon them and does not mete out retribution upon them, do not wonder about the will of the Omnipresent, for so is His custom, to be slow to anger.
For One higher than the high watches. He waits until their measure is filled.
And there are high ones. He has [many agents] over them to punish them when their time of visitation arrives, as in, "you do not wait תִּשְׁמוֹר for my sin," 8 Iyov 14:16. [and as in,] "awaiting שִׁמֵּר the realization," 9 Yeshayahu 26:2. [and as in,] "awaited שָׁמַר the matter." 10 Bereishis 37:11. God waits, but ultimately He will punish them in the proper time.

Verse 8

The profit of the earth is desired by all. And the loftiness of the earth's dwellers, who are haughty and provoke the Omnipresent; "is desired by all," in everything, he performs His mission to punish them, even through gnats, as He did to Titus. 11 See Maseches Gittin 56b for details of Titus' punishment. When God created His world, He did not create a single thing without a purpose, according to the Gemara in Maseches Shabbos 77b.
The king himself is subject to the soil. The Holy One, Blessed Is He, became subservient to Tzion to demand from her destroyers for [their] mistreatment [of Tzion], and to reward her builders.

Verse 9

He who loves money will never be satisfied with money. Whoever loves [to perform God's] commandments never has his fill of them. 12 See the Gemara in Maseches Makkos 10a which interprets that this verse is referring to Moshe.
And he who loves abundance. Of many commandments
Will have no produce. And among them none has a specific and distinguishable commandment, e.g., the building of the Beis Hamikdosh or a synagogue, or [writing] a beautiful Torah scroll.

This too is vanity. So are these two verses expounded upon in the Midrash, and there are other suitable interpretations, but I stated this one first because it is related to the matter of, "and there are higher ones over them," which Scripture juxtaposed to them.
Another explanation: The profit of the earth is desired by all. The reward for tilling the soil is most important of all, for even the king must be subservient to the field; if the earth produces fruits, he will eat, otherwise, he dies from hunger.
He who loves money will never be satisfied with money. He will not eat money.
And he who loves abundance. Of money.
Will have no produce. That he does not gather for himself produce, this too is vanity. 13 Alternatively, "one who loves [an] abundance" of slaves, maidservants and other household members, "will have no produce," i.e., he will be unable to sustain his household staff, for they will consume everything (Metsudas Dovid).
Another explanation: The profit of the earth is desired by all. The reward of Yisroel is in all aspects of Torah, be it in Scripture, in Mishnah, or in Gemara.
The king himself is subject to the soil. If the king is well versed in Scripture and Mishnah, he must still be subservient to the one well-versed in Gemara, because he arranges before him the practical decisions regarding prohibition and permissibility, ritual impurity and purity, and practical laws.
He who loves money. Whoever loves Torah [study], never has his fill with it.
And he who loves abundance. Torah [study].
Will have no produce. One who has [knowledge of] Scripture and Mishnah, but has no [knowledge of] Gemara, what benefit does he have? All these are [expounded] in Vayikra Rabbah.

Verse 10

As goods increase. When the [Bnei] Yisroel improve their deeds.
So do those who consume them. The giving of the reward for [fulfilling] the commandments.
And what advantage has the owner. [I.e.,] to the Holy One, Blessed Is He, with all the improvement of their deeds. 14 Alternatively, "and what good is the owner's skill [=כשרון]," as in 2:21 above.
Except beholding them with his eyes. That He sees that they are subservient to Him, and He has satisfaction, that He commanded and His will was done, and so is the matter concerning the sacrifices.
As goods increase so do those who consume them. When they bring many freewill offerings, the kohanim who eat it increase.
And what advantage has the owner. Before the Holy One, Blessed Is He.
Except beholding them with his eyes. That He commanded, and His will was done.

Verse 11

Sweet is the sleep of the laborer. One who tills the soil sleeps, and he enjoys his sleep, whether he eats little or a lot, for he is already used to it. 15 The Midrash relates that when Rabbi Boon died, Rabbi Zeira incorporated this verse, "sweet is the sleep of the laborer," in his eulogy for Rabbi Boon who was only twenty-eight years old at his death. He said that Rabbi Boon accomplished in his life what would normally take one hundred years.
But the satiety of the rich will not permit him to sleep. But the satiety of possessions of the rich man, who owns much merchandise, does not allow him to sleep because he thinks about it all night. 16 The same idea is

expressed in Mishnayos Avos 2:7, "the more possessions, the more worry." Another explanation: The year שָׁנָה שֶׁל=שְׁנַת of the one who serves God is sweet; whether he has a short life or a long life, he will partake of his reward, the one [who lives few years] like the one who [lives] many [years]. [E.g.,] Moshe led Yisroel forty years, and Shmuel the prophet led them ten years, and Scripture equates them one to another, as it is stated, "Moshe and Aharon among His kohanim, and Shmuel among those who invoke His name, etc." 17 Tehillim 99:6. So is it expounded upon in Tanchuma.
But the satiety of the rich. The one with many traditions.
Will not permit him to sleep. In the grave, as it is stated, "causing the lips of the sleeping to murmur." 18 Shir Hashirim 7:10. Every Torah scholar, in whose name a traditional law is recited, his lips murmur in the grave. 19 See Maseches Yevamos 97a.

Verse 12

Wealth preserved by its owner to his own detriment. Like the wealth of Korach, because of which he became haughty and descended into the grave. 20 Alternatively, a person's wealth jeopardizes his personal safety by exposing him to robbery, kidnap, or even death. (Sforno). Or, "wealth stored by its owner," i.e., he stores his wealth and does not spend it to aid the needy, "to his own detriment," i.e., resulting in the visitation of punishment upon him.

Verse 13

He will have nothing in his hand. Not even the merit of his ancestors.

Verse 14

He will take nothing for his labor. When he dies, he will not take with him any merit of charity that he did with his money during his lifetime.

Verse 15

As he came. That money, so will it go.

Verse 16

[He has] illness. וְחֳלְיוֹ means] the same as 'וְחֹלְיוֹ,' and the vav is superfluous, just as the vav of, "beast חַיַּת of the forest." 21 Tehillim 104:20.

Verse 17

For one to eat and drink and to enjoy the good. To engage in Torah [study], 22 Rashi is consistent with the Midrash Aggadah he cited in 8:15 below, "that all mention of 'eating and drinking' in Koheles refers only to the study of Torah." which is a good doctrine; but he should not accumulate much wealth, rather he should rejoice with the portion given him, for that is his portion.

Verse 18

And the power to enjoy them. In his life.
To take his share. After his death, that he merited to engage in Torah [study] and in [the performance of] commandments during his life, which enabled him to receive reward.

Verse 19

For there are not many. For there is no longevity in this world.
Let him remember the days of his life. For they are few and not many; so why then should he bother to accumulate wealth? Let him labor with something that endures for him in the World to Come during his lifetime.
While God answers [provides] him, etc. The Holy One, Blessed Is He, bears a permanent testimony about this eternally. 23 According to Rashi מענה means, "bears testimony" as in, "you shall not bear false testimony [ לא תענה] in Shemos 20:13. Alternatively, מענה means "answers" as in "may Adonoy answer [יענך] you," in Tehillim 20:2. (Ibn Ezra)
With the joy of his heart. That he rejoiced to do good in his lifetime, and I saw in the Midrash, that this refers to Elkanah, who led Yisroel up to Shiloh on the festivals, and on the route that he brought them up on one year he did not bring them back the following year, in order to publicize the matter and to accustom them. Therefore, Scripture praises him, "This man would go up from his city, etc." 24 I Shmuel 1:3. I believe that this Midrash is at the end of the verse, "for God answers [provides] him with the joy of his heart." This is Elkanah, whom the Holy One, Blessed Is He, established in Scripture, and testifies about him, "this man would go up from his city." 25 Ibid.
Answers [provides] him. This is vowelized with a small pasach [= segol ].. Therefore, I explain it as a noun, as in, "for there was no answer מַעֲנֶה in the mouth[s] of the three men." 26 Iyov 32:5.
With the joy of his heart. That he was happy on the festival.

Chapter 6

Verse 1

And it weighs heavily on man. It is prevalent among mankind. 1 It causes distress upon mankind.

Verse 2

Wealth [and] possessions. Its simple explanation, is its apparent meaning.
Yet God does not give him the power to eat thereof. That he should be happy with his portion to find satisfaction in his wealth, for he strives to oppress and to accumulate much wealth, as the matter is stated, "and he is like death and is never satisfied," 2 Chavakuk 2:5. and also He does not give him the power to perform charity, from which to eat in the future, but a stranger will take that money and perform charity and he will benefit from it. 3 According to Targum, the verse is dealing with a person who dies on account of his sins without leaving heirs. His wife marries a stranger who enjoys the estate that he left. However, the Midrash Aggadah explains it as referring to Torah study.
Wealth, possessions and honor. Scripture, Mishnah, and Aggadah.
Does not give him the power. Because he did not achieve [knowledge of] Gemara, he consequently has no benefit from his studies in any practical decision making.
For instead a stranger will enjoy them. The one who is versed in Gemara.

Verse 3

If a man begets a hundred [children]. Children. 4 "A hundred" is figuratively speaking, it is an expression used to denote "many." (Ibn Ezra)

So that the days of his years are many. (and much wealth and all goodness during the days of his life) His; וְרֵב is an expression meaning "sufficient," [i.e.,] a sufficient [=וְרֵב degree of all goodness. 5 Alternatively, ורב means "and honorable" (Metsudas Dovid). Or, "the length of his life is greater [=ורב] than the average." (Ibn Ezra)
And his soul is not sated. From that goodness, for he is not happy with his portion, to be satisfied with what is his. 6 According to the Midrash, this phrase refers to the soul which comes from Above and is not sated with physical pleasures. Rather, its needs are spiritual, e.g., studying Torah, performing mitzvos and doing good deeds.
And moreover he has no burial. Sometimes he is slain, and dogs devour him. All these happened to Achav, he begot many children, and he had great wealth, but he coveted [the property of] others and was not satisfied with his wealth, and [after he was killed] dogs devoured him. 7 According to the Midrash, only Achav's blood was not buried, as Scripture states in I Melochim 22:38, "the dogs licked it up," but his body was buried in Shomron [Ibid. Verse 37]. Alternatively, he did not have a proper burial, e.g., he was buried without burial shrouds (Ibn Ezra). Or, he was involved and focused on accumulating wealth to such a degree that one might think he would live forever and need "no burial." (Ateres Shmuel)
Better off than he is the stillborn child. [The stillborn] of a woman, for the stillborn came in vanity and went, he neither saw good nor desired it; so he does not need to be distressed.

Verse 4

Verse 5

Verse 6

Though he live. And if he had lived two thousand years, 8 Alternatively, one million years [1000=אלף פעמים x1000]. (Ibn Ezra) what advantage would he have, since he did not experience any pleasure. Will he not ultimately return to the dust like all the poor people?

Verse 7

All man's labor. Is for his mouth, that he should benefit and eat in this world and in the next, but this one had no benefit in his life.
Yet his appetite is never filled. This is a question; i.e., but this one, did he not even gratify his desire with a small pleasure? This is similar to, "I will satisfy תְּמַלְאֵמוֹ my lust with them," 9 Shemos 15:9. an expression of attaining a desire. And since this is so —

Verse 8

What advantage. [What advantage does he have] with his wisdom, over what he would have if he were a fool.
What disadvantage has the poor man. Over the rich man who has no satisfaction. He too knows how to go along with the living. Another explanation: Yet his appetite is never filled. For the World to Come, for he did not perform good deeds in his lifetime.

Verse 9

Better is what the eyes actually see than the imagination of the soul. It would have been better and more proper for this one to gaze upon his wealth [to enjoy] what his eyes see, than [by investing his wealth] in food and drink that nourish the soul.
Another explanation: Better is what the eyes actually see than the imagination of the soul. It would have better and more proper for this one to follow his eyes, to rob and to oppress, rather than [being mindful of] the course of his soul, that he did not care where his soul will go when he dies. 10 Alternatively, it would be better for a person to actually see where the soul of the righteous goes and where the soul of the wicked goes after their death. He would realize the difference and mend his ways. (Metsudas Dovid)
This too is vanity. It is what is given to the wicked.

Verse 10

Whatever has been has already been named. The stature and greatness that had been established during his lifetime, "has already been named," i.e., it already was and passed, he already had attained fame, and now it has passed, and it was made known that he was a man 11 According to the Midrash, this refers to Adam. Note that the gematria (numerical value) of 'מה' [=45] is equal to 'אדם' [=45], man. and not god, and his end was that he died, and he was unable to strive with the angel of death, who is more powerful than he.

Verse 11

For there are many things. With which he occupied himself during his lifetime, such as the games of the kings, [e.g.,] monkeys, elephants and lions. They increased vanity for him, and what remains for him after he dies.

Verse 12

For who knows. For who knows good deeds and what man should do during his life, so that it will bring him goodness in the hereafter.
In the counted days of his vanity. Which are limited in number
Which he spends. Those deeds, in the limited time that he lives, for this time is as short as the shadow of a passing bird, 12 Alternatively, "that he may do them [ויעשם] like a shadow," i.e., while alive, a person should never rest, just as a shadow moves constantly as a result of the sun's angle, so should a person constantly be on the move and be performing these good deeds constantly. (Metsudas Dovid) and although Shlomo said, "like a shadow," in general, and did not specify whether the shadow of a palm tree, or the shadow of a wall, which are permanent, his father Dovid had already explained it, "his days are like a passing shadow," 13 Tehillim 144:4. this is the shadow of a flying bird. 14 This is deduced in the following manner. A shadow has no permanency so when Scripture states "passing shadow," it seems superfluous. Obviously, the "passing shadow" is a description of the object that is casting the shadow, e.g., a flying bird that passes [=flies] by. It is thus expounded in this manner in the Midrash.
For who can tell a man. How will the wealth that he gathered from oppression remain for his children after him, under the sun.

Chapter 7

Verse 1

Better a good name than precious oil. A fine reputation for a person is better than precious oil, 1 The Mishnah in Avos 4:13 states that there are three crowns, the crown of Torah, the crown of Kehunah and the crown of royalty, but the crown of a good name [כתר שם טוב], i.e., fine reputation, surpasses them all. and on the day of [his] death that reputation is better than [it was] on the day he was born. For this reason, a good name is compared to oil in preference to other liquids, for [if] you put water into oil, it rises and floats, and is distinguishable, but other liquids, [if] you put water into them, it becomes absorbed.
Better a good name than precious oil. Precious oil runs down, as it is stated, "as the precious oil (on the head) runs down upon the beard." 2 Tehillim 133:2. But a good name rises to the top, as it is stated, "and I will make your name great." 3 Bereishis 12:2. Precious oil is temporary, but a fine reputation is forever, as it is stated, "may his name endure forever." 4 Tehillim 72:17. Precious oil [at best] flows from the flask to the palace, and no further, but a fine reputation [spreads] throughout the world. 5 The fragrance of good oil dissipates but a good name grows constantly stronger. (Metsudas Dovid) Rabbi Yehudah the son of Rabbi Simon said, that we find that those who had good oil entered the place of life and emerged burnt up. These are Nadav and Avihu, who were anointed with the anointing oil. And we find those who possessed a fine reputation, who entered a place of death and emerged alive, [these are] Chananyah, Mishaeil, and Azaryah, who emerged [unscathed] from the fiery furnace.
And the day of death than the day birth. When Miriam was born, no one knew what she was. But when she died, the well ceased to exist, and similarly with Aharon with the pillar of cloud, and Moshe with the manna. 6 Alternatively, a fine reputation is better on the day of death than on the day of birth, because so long as one lives, his reputation is subject to possible future deterioration, whereas on the day of death there are no uncertainties. This thought is found in the Mishnah in Avos 2:4 wherein Hillel said, "do not believe in yourself until the day you die." (Sforno) Or, it is good for one to consider his death [יום המות], beginning from the time that he is born [יום הולדו], and by doing so he will refrain from sinning. (Khilos Yaakov)

Verse 2

Better to go to a house of mourning. [Where] the type of conduct serves both the living and the dead.
Than to go to a house of feasting. [Where] the type of conduct serves only the living. 7 Upon going to a house of mourning a person realizes that he too will be mourned when his time comes. This will cause him to be humbled and make him aware of sin. (Metsudas Dovid) Alternatively, the kindness done for the dead is absolute and the level of kindness [חסד שלא אמת], for the provider does anticipate any payback because that is "the end of all men." However, when going to a house of feasting, e.g., a wedding, the newly married couple "take to heart" to remember that act of kindness so that they can return the kindness. The latter type of kindness is somewhat inferior to the former, and therefore Koheles says, "it is better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of feasting, etc. (Binah La'itim) 8 Frequenting the company of those who pursue honor and vanity arouses one's lust and desire for those things, and that is the intent of this verse. (Mesilas Yeshorim)
For that is the end of all men. Because mourning marks the end of every person. Every person will ultimately come to this. Therefore, "the living should take it to heart," [to the fact that] whatever kindness I bestow upon the dead, I will need that they bestow [the same] upon me upon my

death. He who raises his voice in lamentation, they will raise their voices in lamentation for him; he who bears the dead, they will bear him; he who eulogizes, they will eulogize him; he who escorts the dead, they will escort him.
Another explanation: For that is the end of all men. For death is the end of all man's days, and if he does not bestow kindness upon him now, he will no longer [be able to] bestow it upon him, but [if] he invited him to a house of feasting and he did not go, he can say to him, "a son will ultimately be born to you, and I will be there with you, the joy of your child's wedding will come to you, and I will go there."
And the living should take it to heart. This matter, that if he does not bestow kindness now, he will no longer [be able to] bestow it upon him. 9 Alternatively, if a person who is planning to do evil visits a house of mourning, he will surely "take it to heart" the matters dealing with death, and will thus abandon his plans and repent before God. (Targum)

Verse 3

Better vexation than levity. If one is pursued by the [Divine] standard of justice, he should not be depressed. 10 Alternatively, "better vexation stemming from levity," i.e., when a situation calls for vexation [e.g., a teacher with his student], it should be only an appearance on the outside of anger, but not an emotional, true feeling, of anger. In the words of the Mesilas Yeshorim [Chapter 11] "any anger shown should be anger of the face and not anger of the heart." It would have been better for the generation of the flood if the Holy One, Blessed Is He, had showed them an angry countenance because of their sins, rather than the laughter that He laughed with them, for had He shown them a slight expression of displeasure, they would have returned to [do] good. 11 See Maseches Shabbos 30b. It would have been better for Adoniyahu had his father caused him grief for every sin that he committed, rather than the laughter that he showed him, and for which he was ultimately killed.
The heart is made better. It will reverse man's heart and cause him to improve his ways. 12 Alternatively, as a result of the drought and retribution inflicted upon the world, the righteous will pray to God for mercy. (Targum)

Verse 4

The heart of the wise [will reflect on] the house of mourning. Their thoughts 13 The literal translation is somewhat difficult because the heart of the wise is located in the same place as everyone else, therefore Rashi explains that it refers to their thoughts. ( Sifsei Chachomim ) are [focused] on the day of death. 14 These are their thoughts even when they are not visiting a house of mourning. As a result they subordinate their desires and avoid sin. (Metsudas Dovid) 15 Alternatively, the heart of the wise mourns over the destruction of the Beis Hamikdosh and grieve over Yisroel's exile. (Targum)
But the heart of the fools [are attracted] to the house of feasting. They do not fear the[ir] day of death, and their heart is as sound as a palace. 16 They are always thinking about joy and levity which brings a person to sin. (Metsudas Dovid) 17 Alternatively, the heart of fools is involved in mockery, in eating, drinking and seeking enjoyment, and they have no concern over the suffering of their brethren. (Targum)

Verse 5

Verse 6

For like the crackling of thorns. Thorn wood, espines in O.F.
Under a pot. Under a copper pot turned over a fire of thorns, and they rattle into it. 18 The crackling of thorns in the fire lasts only a brief moment and then is gone. So, too, the laughter of the fool has no useful purpose or lasting value. Or, the verse conveys the thought that the wise grieve because they are fearful that they are lacking in their service to God, whereas fools are generally satisfied and happy because they feel they have totally fulfilled their obligation in their service to God. Rabbi Yehoshua the son of Leivi said, that all [other] woods when they are kindled, their sound does not travel [far], but when thorns are kindled, their sound travels [far], as if to say, "We, too, are of wood". They publicize, "We too are wood, and we are needed." So do fools speak excessively, [as if] to say, "We, too, are important."
This too is vanity. And it is labor, which the Holy One, Blessed Is He, gave the people to toil in and to be vexed with.

Verse 7

For quarreling makes the wise foolish. When the fool provokes the wise person, he confuses his thoughts, and he too, stumbles. Dasan and Aviram taunted Moshe, by saying, "may Adonoy look down upon you and judge, etc.," 19 Shemos 5:21. and they confused him and caused his wisdom to depart and to speak in anger 20 A wise person should distance himself from being involved in discussion with fools because it will cause his own wisdom to suffer. (Metsudas Dovid) against the Holy One, Blessed Is He, and he said, "and You did not save Your people," 21 Ibid. Verse 23. and he was punished for this matter, when He replied to him, "now you will see," 22 Ibid. 6:1. but you will not see the war of the thirty-one kings.
And a gift [corrupts] the heart. The heart of wisdom, which is a gift to man, 23 I.e., the provocation by the wicked, causes the wise to forfeit their wisdom, which is God's gift to man. as it is stated, "For Adonoy gives wisdom." 24 Mishlei 2:6.
Quarreling. An expression of conflict and provocation. There are other interpretations, but they separate the verses one from the other, but "וְ" [=for] which is stated at the beginning of the verse proves that it is connected to the preceding verse.

Verse 8

Better is the end of a matter than its beginning. [To be interpreted] according to its apparent meaning, [i.e.,] at the beginning of a matter, we do not know what will be its outcome, 25 And we are therefore unable to evaluate it properly. but when the outcome is good, it ends well. Another explanation: Better is the end of a matter than its beginning. When it is good from its beginning, [i.e.,] that they had good intentions when they started it. 26 Alternatively, immediately at the beginning of a matter, a person should reflect on its repercussions, and by doing so he will constantly improve himself, as the Gemara in Maseches Tamid 32a states, "Who is wise? He who discerns what is about to come to pass."
(Ksav Sofer) Rabbi Meir stood and expounded the entire matter as referring to Elisha the son of Avuyah, 27 Rashi should not be translated literally, that Rabbi Meir expounded this matter etc., rather Rabbi Meir was in the midst of expounding when Elisha clarified to Rabbi Meir what Rabbi Akiva expounded pertaining to this verse. ( Sifsei Chachomim ) in Midrash Koheles.
Patience. One who is slow to anger and is not easily provoked. 28 See Mishnayos Avos 5:11.

Verse 9

Do not quicken. Do not rush.

Verse 10

Do not say, was it that the former days, etc. Do not wonder about the goodness that was bestowed upon the righteous men of yore, such as the generation of the wilderness, the generation of Yehoshua and the generation of Dovid.
For it is not out of wisdom that you ask. For everything depends upon the merit of the generations. 29 Alternatively, the answer to this question is beyond human comprehension. (Metsudas Dovid)

Verse 11

It is good to have wisdom, etc. Their wisdom stood for them together with the heritage of the merit of their forefathers, for wisdom is good. 30 Alternatively, נחלה refers to a monetary inheritance or a skill that is handed down from father to son (Ibn Ezra). Thereby, one is able to immerse himself in his studies without having the burden of financial worries (Alshich). See Mishnayos Avos 2:2 which states that the study of Torah is good when combined with an occupation, for the exertion of them both makes sin forgotten. Or, wisdom is good as an accompaniment to an inheritance, for without wisdom, the wealth he came into will not endure. (Metsudas Dovid)
And [such wisdom] benefits those who see the sun. Wisdom is a benefit for all mankind.
Those who see the sun. This refers to all mankind, as it was taught in the Mishnah, 31 Mishnayos Nedarim 3:7. "He who vows not to benefit from those who see the sun, is also forbidden [to benefit] from the blind." The intention [of this phrase] is to [include] anyone who benefits from the sun.

Verse 12

For wisdom shelters [as well] as money shelters. Whoever is in the shade of wisdom is in the shade of money, for wisdom causes eventual wealth. 32 Alternatively, just as wisdom of the Torah gives life [i.e., shelters] in the World of Come, so does money that is given to charity provide life [i.e., shelters] in the World to Come. (Targum)
But the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who possesses it. And moreover, wisdom has an advantage over money, because wisdom preserves the life of its possessors. 33 Wisdom is not subject to death or consumption. The idea that "wisdom preserves the life of him who possesses it," may be in reference to the Gemara in Maseches Yevamos 97a, which states that the lips of a deceased scholar in whose name a traditional statement is reported in this world, move gently in the grave. (Reb Tzvi Charif)

Verse 13

Consider the deeds of God. How everything is prepared according to man's actions, the Garden of Eden for the righteous and Gehinnom for the wicked. Consider to which you should cling.
For who [else] can straighten. After death that which he made crooked during his life? 34 Alternatively, only God can straighten what He made crooked on account of the inequity of the generation, e.g., the Gemara in Maseches Rosh Hashanah 17b states, that if little rain had been decreed on account of the inequities of the generation and afterwards the people

improved their ways, God will rectify what He made crooked and cause the rain to fall in its proper time and place without the loss of a drop. (Metsudas Dovid)

Verse 14

On a day of goodness [prosperity], be in good spirits. On a day in which you have the ability to do good, 35 Alternatively, on a day of good fortune be happy and enjoy it. (Metsudas Dovid) be among those who do good.
And on a day of adversity reflect. When evil comes upon the wicked, be among the observers, 36 Adversity is caused by being sinful. Therefore, examine your deeds and remove any sins by repenting (Sforno). Alternatively, on a day of adversity, reflect and be hopeful for a day of goodness to come. (Likutei Yehudah) as it is stated, "And they will go out and see the corpses of the people, etc.," 37 Yeshayahu 66:24. and you will not be among those who are seen, "and they will be a sight for all mankind." 38 Ibid.
The one was set up against the other. The good and the reward for its performance, in contrast to the evil and the ensuing punishment for doing it. 39 Alternatively, "one set up against the other," refers to the punishment that was set up against the evil deeds, i.e., the concept of מדה כנגד מדה, that is, the manner of punishment corresponds to the sin, and it is never meted out in a greater amount than warranted.
That man should not find anything after him. To be critical of the Holy One, Blessed Is He.

Verse 15

There is a righteous man who perishes [despite] his righteousness. Although he is perishing, he is nonetheless steadfast in his righteousness. 40 Alternatively, "there is a righteous man who perishes because of his righteousness," i.e., were he not righteous, he might not have been punished at all. God is more demanding with the righteous, as stated in Maseches Yevamos 121b (Metsudas Dovid and Alshich). Avrohom, Yaakov, Yoseif, Dovid, Michal and Chizkiyah are examples of righteous people who did not escape judgement because of a slight indiscretion on their part. (Mesilas Yeshorim) There was an incident concerning Yoseif the son of Pinchas the kohen who had an ulcerating sore on his leg. They called the physician to amputate his leg. He said to him, "when you are about to reach the last remaining hairbreadth [of completing the amputation], let me know," and he did so. He then called his son Chunya and said to him, "My son, until now, you were obligated to care for me. But, from now on, you are no longer obligated to care for me, because a kohen may not become ritually impure from a limb cut off from his father while he was alive."

Verse 16

Be not exceedingly righteous. Like Shaul, who tried to display his righteousness and [misdirected] his mercy on the wicked.
Nor overly wise. To deduce from a foolish inference from a minor case to a major case, [namely,] that for [the murder] of one person, said the Torah, bring a decapitated heifer, etc. 41 This Rashi refers back to the preceding one and explains the misdirected logic which led Shaul to spare Amoleik.

Verse 17

Be not excessively wicked. Even if you have been somewhat wicked, do not continue to act wickedly.
Why should you die before your time. As Shaul did, as it is stated, "and Shaul died for his transgressions that he committed [against Adonoy]," 42 I Divrei Hayomim 10:13. in the case of Nov, the city of kohanim, 43 See I Shmuel 22:16-19. and in the case of Amoleik. 44 See I Shmuel 15:8-15.

Verse 18

It is best to take hold of one, etc. Grasp both, righteousness and wickedness. If the righteous prophet told you something that appears to you as being evil, e.g., what Shmuel said to Shaul, let it not be taken lightly by you to doubt it.
Will discharge his duty to both. Both of them, to preserve the righteousness and the wickedness according to their rule.

Verse 19

Wisdom gives [more] strength to the wise. Since it stated, "be not excessively wicked," 45 Above, verse 17. if you have been somewhat wicked, do not add to it, rather examine your deeds and regret the sin. He states, "wisdom gives [more] strength to the wise," because it leads him to repentance. 46 Rashi explains the juxtaposition of verse 17 with this verse is to teach that in the event a person sinned slightly, his wisdom will encourage him to repent his way. ( Sifsei Chachomim )
Than ten rulers. We find regarding Yoshiyahu, that Scripture testified about him, "the likes of him there had never been a king before him, etc." 47 II Melochim 23:25. Therefore, his wisdom remained with him, and he examined his actions, and it was better for him than "ten rulers" who acted wickedly and did not repent. 48 Alternatively, the עשרה refers to Yoseif, and the ten rulers refer to Yoseif's brothers. (Targum)
Of the city. In Yerusholayim. [The ten were,] Rechovam, Aviyah, Achazyah, Yo'ash, after the death of Yehoyada, 49 For as long as Yehoyada was alive, Yo'ash was completely righteous. ( Sifsei Chachomim ) Amatzyah, Achaz, Menashe, Amon, Yehoyakim, and Tzidkiyahu.

Verse 20

For there is not a righteous man on earth. Therefore, he must examine his actions. 50 Rashi is explaining the previous verse [Above 7:19], where one could question that instead of stating that wisdom encourages a person to repent, would not wisdom deter one from sinning altogether. Therefore Scripture declares that "there is not a righteous man...who...never sins."

Verse 21

Furthermore, of all the words, etc. Because he is speaking of Shaul, who accepted slander regarding Nov the city of kohanim, and concerning him it is stated, " Be not excessively wicked," 51 Above, verse 17. he says, "Furthermore of all the words that are spoken," to you by talebearers, "take them not to heart," to accept them.
Lest you hear your own servant curse you. It is not good that you incline your ear to hear your servant cursing you. 52 As Dovid did with Shimi the son of Geira. See II Shmuel 16:5-13. ( Sifsei Chachomim )
Another explanation: Than ten rulers. These are the ten things that condemn a person. His two eyes show him sinful things, his two ears which enable him to hear idle talk, his two hands with which he robs and plunders, his two feet which lead him to sinful things, and his mouth and his heart.

Another explanation: Wisdom gives [more] strength to the wise. This is No'ach. Than ten rulers. More than the ten generations that were before him.
Another explanation: To the wise. This is Avrohom. Than ten rulers. More than the ten generations that were before him.
Another explanation: To the wise. This is Yoseif. Than ten rulers. These are his brothers.
Another explanation: To the wise. This is Moshe. Than ten rulers. [The] ten organs that minister to food ingested by the body. From his mouth to the esophagus, from the esophagus to the stomach, etc., as it is [stated] in Midrash Koheles, but Moshe's wisdom stood for him so that he did not need food for forty days and forty nights. All these interpretations are in the Midrash, but I am unable to reconcile them with the verse following, "For there is not a righteous man on earth." 53 Above, verse 20.

Verse 22

Verse 23

"All this I have probed with wisdom," 54 Below, verse 23. refers to the verses below (other texts: and not) and [to the verses] above.
I have probed with wisdom. With the [wisdom of the] Torah.
I said I will be wise. To know the wisdom [of Torah]. 55 Alternatively, if I consider myself a wise person [=אמרתי אחכמה], then it is beyond doubt that wisdom is very distant from me [=והיא רחוקה ממני]. (Rabbi of Kotzk)
But [it proved to be] far beyond me. And what is this? 56 Alternatively, the reason why the Torah proved to be far, i.e., I am unable to comprehend it, is because of me [=ממני] and not, God forbid, that the Torah is lacking. (Amtachas Binyomin)

Verse 24

That which was is far beyond me. The distant things that were in the Creation.
And so very deep it is; who can find it, for I am not permitted to delve into them, what is above and what is below, what is before and what is after. 57 See Maseches Chagigah 11b. Furthermore—

Verse 25

So I turned about. To know and to search out and to seek the wisdom [=meaning] of the section dealing with the Red Heifer 58 The numerical value [gematria] of "והיא רחוקה" equals 341, the same as "פרה אדומה." 59 The Gemara in Maseches Yoma 14a states, that verse 7:23 above "I said, 'I will be wise but it proved far beyond [והיא רחוקה] me,'" is referring to the Red Heifer, whose ashes render ritually clean one who has become contaminated by contact with a corpse, and yet these same ashes contaminate one who is ritually clean. and the computation of the End [of exile] for Redemption.
And to know that wickedness is folly. To foresee the ultimate end of heresy, and "foolishness is madness," [i.e.,] the confusion and madness therein.

Verse 26

And I find more bitter than death. Which is the severest of the ten harsh things that were created in the world, as it is [stated] in [Maseches] Bava Basra, in [the chapter entitled] "The Partners." 60 10a. "And I find more bitter" and severe than it, "the woman," this refers to heresy.
Whose her heart is full of [traps and] nets. An expression of a net, as in, "he catches them in his net and gathers them in his trawl." 61 Chavakuk 1:15.
Her hands as chains. Once she seizes a man, he is as though bound with thick ropes.
Chains. אֲסוּרִים is] a noun meaning "bonds," as in, "and his bonds אֲסוּרָיו melted," 62 Shoftim 15:14. meaning his bonds, and so did Menachem explain it.

Verse 27

See, this is what I have found, says Koheles, adding one to another to find an accounting. All the commandments that the righteous perform, and the transgressions that the wicked commit, are counted before the Holy One, Blessed Is He, one [is placed next] to the other, and they combine to a large amount. So did our Rabbis explain it in Maseches Sotah. 63 8b.
Says Koheles. Said the collection of wisdom, [i.e.,] said his intellectual soul which collects [his] wisdom.
Koheles. This קֹהֶלֶת is a feminine noun, and when it is used in the masculine form, it refers to the one who gathers it, i.e., Shlomo. We find in the Midrash, Rabbi Yirmiyah the son of Elazar said, that the Holy Spirit sometimes speaks in the masculine gender and sometimes it speaks in the feminine gender. One verse states, "you are my help עֶזְרִי and my rescuer," 64 Tehillim 70:6. and another verse states, "you are my help עֶזְרָתִי and my rescuer." 65 Ibid. 40:18. [Also,] one verse states, "a herald מְבַשֵּׂר proclaiming peace," 66 Nachum 2:1. and another verse states, (the voice of) 67 The text in the parenthesis is not part of the verse. "the herald מְבַשֶּׂרֶת of Tzion." 68 Yeshayahu 40:9.

Verse 28

For which yet my soul searches. In addition to those [quests] mentioned above, which I sought and did not find, my soul sought a proper one among women, but I did not find one, because they are all lightheaded.
One [worthy] man among a thousand I have found. It is customary in the world, [that out of] a thousand who enter [a school] to [learn] Scripture, emerge from them— successful and capable of [the study of] Mishnah— only one hundred. And of those hundred who enter [to study] Mishnah, only ten of them emerge for [the study of] Gemara, and of those ten who enter to [study] Gemara, only one emerges who is capable of rendering decisions [pertaining to religious matters], the result being one out of a thousand.
But a [worthy] woman among all of them. Even in a thousand; therefore, you must be cautious regarding her.

Verse 29

See, this only have I found. And which brought to the world a stumbling block through her.
That [God] made. The Holy One, Blessed Is He [created] Adam perfectly upright. 69 As God stated in Bereishis 3:22 regarding Adam, "Behold, the man has become like one of us to know [what is] good and [what is] evil."
But they. When his wife Chavah was paired up with him, 70 Rashi is explaining the reason for the change to plural ["they"] when the subject is singular ["man"]. and they became two and were called "they."

Sought out many stratagems. Plans and designs of sin. So is it expounded in the Midrash.

Chapter 8

Verse 1

Who is like the wise person. Who in the world is as important as a wise man?
And who knows how to interpret things. [I.e.,] the solution וּפִשְׁרוֹן of things, 1 Alternatively, and "who is like the one who knows how to interpret things." (Metsudas Dovid) as we find regarding Daniyeil, because of his wisdom, for he was wise in the fear of Heaven, secret solutions וּפִשְׁרוֹן were revealed to him. Who is like Moshe, who brought about compromises between Yisroel and their Father in Heaven?
And the boldness of his face is changed. From that of other people, to the extent that they feared "to approach him" [Moshe], "because the skin of his face was radiant." 2 Shemos 34:29, 30. 3 Alternatively, wisdom begets humility and does away with anger and arrogance (Ibn Ezra). Or, because of his wisdom, everyone admires and obeys him, giving him a jubilant countenance. (Metsudas Dovid)

Verse 2

My [advice to you is] keep the King's command. Therefore, I need to and I am prepared to observe the commandment of the King of the Universe, which is the best of them all.
And do so because of the oath to God. Which we swore to Him at Choreiv, to keep His commandments.
Another explanation: I am prepared to observe the command of the kings of the nations who rule over us with head taxes and property taxes. And do so because of the oath to God. Provided that they do not cause us to violate the oath [of allegiance] that we swore to the Omnipresent.
And do so because of [the oath]. And alongside the oath of God, I will keep the command of the kings. 4 I.e., I will obey the command of kings as long as it does not conflict with the oath of allegiance that we swore to God. And similarly we find with Chananyah, Mishaeil, and Azaryah, who said to Nevuchadnetzar, "they said, 'O King Nevuchadnetzar, we are not worried about replying to you about this matter.'" 5 Daniyeil 3:16. If he was king why [call him] "Nevuchadnetzar," and if Nevuchadnetzar, why [call him] "king"? But, this is what they said to him, "We say to you that you are our 'king' regarding work and the head taxes, but regarding your ordering us to worship idols, you are 'Nevuchadnetzar,' and not king."

Verse 3

Do not hasten to leave His Presence. Do not be hasty and say that you intend to flee from His Presence to a place where He does not reign, for He reigns everywhere.
Do not persist in doing evil. Do not persist to engage in evil matters. 6 Alternatively, "do not pause at a bad thing," i.e., an inauspicious verse. When reading from the Torah, the reader should begin and/or end at a good matter, e.g., he may stop in the middle of section dealing with blessings. However, he may not stop in the middle of the section dealing with curses, but he must read them all without interruption. (Midrash)
For whatever pleases Him. To mete retribution upon you, He has the authority and ability to do so.

Verse 4

For the King's word is all powerful. Because the word of the Holy One, Blessed Is He is the Ruler, and who will say to Him, "What are You doing?" But if you "preserve the commandment," 7 Below, verse 5. you will know no evil and it will not befall you. 8 Alternatively, verses 3-4 refer to a mortal king and are translated accordingly. (Metsudas Dovid)

Verse 5

And [the significance of] time and judgment is known by the wise man. The wise person perceives that there is a predetermined time for the visitation of punishment upon the wicked, and there are judgments before the Holy One, Blessed Is He, with which He will exact justice from them. Judgment is justice in O.F., and it refers to the punishment.

Verse 6

For every matter. When a person satisfies his desire and transgresses the law, a time to exact retribution [is cast], and justice and punishment are ready.
When the evil of man overwhelms him. When man's evil becomes exceedingly overwhelming and his measure overflows, then his punishment arrives; 'וְכִי' is used as an expression of "when," as in, "When כִּי they have a concern, it comes to me." 9 Shemos 18:16.

Verse 7

For he knows not what will be. When the wicked man sins, he does not give thought that the Holy One, Blessed Is He, is destined to bring him to judgment, and woe is to him because of this. 10 Alternatively, man is unable to foresee specific future events. Ibn Ezra
For when it comes to pass. The punishment, "who will tell him," [i.e.,] to discuss [the matter] with him and to take advice and to ask permission, for it will suddenly befall him. 11 Alternatively, when a person is about to sin, who will forewarn him of the consequences so that he will be more cautious. (Sforno)

Verse 8

Man has no power over the spirit. [I.e., over] the spirit and inclination of the emissary 12 I.e., the angel of death. We find the term רוח [=spirit] referring to angels in Tehillim 104:4, "He makes the רוחות His messengers." of the Omnipresent, to retain and withhold from him the spirit in his body, so that the angel of death should not take it.
He has no power. [The power] of any king [is not] discernable on the day of his death. 13 Alternatively, all the power of the ruler is thwarted on the day of his death, i.e., to save himself from death. Everywhere [in Scripture] you find [that Dovid is referred to as], "King Dovid," but on the day of his death [it states], "And the days of Dovid drew near that he should die," 14 I Melochim 2:1. and no kingship is mentioned here. 15 Though in Shemos 2:23 it states "the king of Egypt died," that is speaking of a historic event that happened in the past, however, when Scripture speaks of the event as it is occurring, kingship is not mentioned. (Likutei Yehudah)
Nor dispatch in battle. [In] this [battle by] saying, "I will send my son or my servant instead of me." 16 Rashi interprets משחת as dispatch or send [שלוח]. Alternatively, משחת means weaponry, as in II Divrei Hayomim

32:5 and Nechemyah 4:11. Accordingly, this phrase means that weaponry [prepared for war] is of no avail to save one who is destined to die.

Verse 9

All this I have seen. What is mentioned above.
And I applied my heart to [understand] all the work. And also to all mankind's work I applied my mind, and I saw the time that a man ruled over another and overpowered him, and ultimately it turned to his own detriment. 17 Because, "God seeks the pursued," see above 3:15. [E.g.,] Amoleik overpowered Yisroel, and ultimately [it states about Amoleik], "and his end will be that he will be lost forever." 18 Bamidbar 24:20. And the same happened to Pharaoh, and the same with Nevuchadnetzar, and the same with Sancheiriv.

Verse 10

And so. And then.
I have seen how the wicked were buried. In this prophecy, I saw wicked men buried, who were worthy of being buried in the dust, for they were held in contempt by the nations, about whom it is stated, "this people has never been," 19 Yeshayahu 23:13. and they ruled over the Beis [Hamikdosh] of the Holy One, Blessed Is He, which is a holy place. And when they went from there to their land, they boasted in their city that they did such and such in the Beis [Hamikdosh] of the Omnipresent. Do not read 'וְיִשְׁתַּכְּחוּ', [=and they will be forgotten,] but 'וְיִשְׁתַּבְּחוּ', [=and they will boast]. So did our Rabbis of blessed memory expound it. 20 See Maseches Gittin 56b. Concerning the forgetting, 21 I.e., the wording of the written text [וישתכחו]. it is expounded as follows in the Aggadah: And ultimately, their name and their remembrance will be forgotten from that very city, that they did so therein, as it is stated, "I will gather all the nations [and I will take them down] to the Valley of Yehoshophot." 22 Yoel 4:2. In the place where they angered Him, He will mete out retribution upon them, and so it states, "O Adonoy, in the city, You will despise their form." 23 Tehillim 73:20.
This too. Is one of the vanities that were given to the world to weary mankind, for the Holy One, Blessed Is He, does not rush to mete out retribution upon evildoers, and [therefore] mankind thinks that there is neither judgment nor Judge.

Verse 11

Because the execution of sentence. Punishment for the evil deeds [is not done] quickly. For the Holy One, Blessed Is He, does not rush to mete out retribution upon the evildoers, and therefore, they think that there is no judgment, and they are encouraged to do evil.

Verse 12

Though a sinner, etc. Because they see that the sinner does evil a hundred thousand and myriads [of times], and the Holy One, Blessed Is He, grants him an extension without meting out retribution. 24 As Iyov [24:12] complained, "From the city people groan, and the souls of the slain cry out; yet God does not impute it for unseemliness." (Metsudas Dovid)
A hundred times. This is an ellipsis, 25 I.e., the omission of a word or words necessary for complete construction but understood in the context. and it is connected to [the words] preceding it, meaning, a hundred days, a hundred years, a hundred thousand. And similarly, [what Scripture

states], "and drunk 26 ",וּשְׁכֵרַת Yeshayahu 51:21. is an ellipsis, and it is missing drunk "from wrath" but not from wine, like other drunkenness. Nevertheless I know. For despite all this, that He does not rush to mete retribution upon the wicked to make a distinction, between the righteous and the wicked, I know that each one will ultimately receive his due, and that those who fear Him will fare well.

Verse 13

And it will not be well with the wicked. Because he does not fear God. 27 Based on this verse, the Gemara in Kiddushin 33b states that any scholar who does not rise before his teacher is considered wicked, will not live long and will forget his learning.

Verse 14

There is a vanity. Something that confounds mankind.
There are righteous men. To whom evil happens [as though] they acted wickedly, and there are wicked to whom good happens [as though] they acted righteously. 28 Alternatively, there are righteous men who acquire a bad reputation as though they acted wickedly, is referring to a foolish righteous person who takes the practices of his piety to ridiculous levels (Sforno). Mesilas Yeshorim states that one must not decide upon the saintliness of a deed on the basis of its surface appearance alone, rather he should view the deed, including its consequence(s), from every angle of human intelligence, and then determine whether or not to perform the deed. I said that this too is one of the vanities that prevails in the world. However, our Rabbis expounded it in a different manner in Maseches Horiyos, 29 10b. but it is not explained satisfactorily to me, according to the words that the wise man concludes by saying, "This too is vanity."

Verse 15

Rejoicing. That he should be happy with in his lot 30 Alternatively, I extolled the virtuous trait of rejoicing, i.e., the trait of being able to accept every occurrence in life with happiness and joy. (Derech Hachayim) and engage in the "upright commands," which "cause the heart to rejoice," 31 Tehillim 19:9. and he should not be immersed in increasing his wealth by means of usury, interest and robbery. 32 The Gemara in Maseches Shabbos 30b sees an apparent contradiction between this verse which extolls the concept of rejoicing, and the verse above [2:2], which states, "and of joy, what does it accomplish." The Gemara explains that the verse here is speaking of a celebration or rejoicing of a mitzvah, e.g., a marriage, therefore rejoicing is extolled, whereas verse 2:2 above speaks of rejoicing without purpose, and is therefore frowned upon. Whoever is not happy with his lot and is immersed in amassing wealth, eventually commits the sins of robbery, fraud, and usury. Also, one who is not happy with his lot concerning the love of his wife, is immersed in [a passionate lust for] women, and harbors sinful thoughts about married women.
To eat and drink. From that which the Holy One, Blessed Is He, graciously granted him, and to be happy with his lot. And the Midrash Aggadah [states], that all mention of "eating and drinking" in Koheles, refers only to the study of Torah, as the matter is stated, "go, buy, and eat, etc." 33 Yeshayahu 55:1.
And this will accompany him. Will join him, as the matter is stated, "and your righteousness shall go before you." 34 Ibid. 58:8.
[All] the days of his life which God has given him. He shall do so, and the end of the verse is connected to its beginning, and it is a

transposed verse [whose meaning is], "there is nothing better for man in [all] the days of his life that God has given him than to eat and drink and be joyful, and this will accompany him in his toil."

Verse 16

When I applied my heart. This "כַּאֲשֶׁר" is not used as an expression of an example, as in, "as כַּאֲשֶׁר he did, so shall it be done," 35 Vayikra 24:19. rather it is an expression of time, as in, "When כַּאֲשֶׁר Yoseif came," 36 Bereishis 37:23. [and as in,] "when כַּאֲשֶׁר they finished eating, etc." 37 Ibid. 43:2. This too is so, When כַּאֲשֶׁר I applied my heart "to know, to explore, etc.," 38 Above 7:25. then, "I saw all the works of God." [Neither] does he see sleep with his eyes. The wicked person 39 According to Rashi, the subject of the phrase, "neither does he sleep...," is the wicked person, who does not sleep because he is so engrossed in his activities. Alternatively, שנה [=sleep] can also be a reference to death, as in Daniyeil 12:2, "many of those who sleep [מישנ׳] in the dusty earth [i.e., the dead] will awaken." The wicked person never considers his death, and that ultimately, he will have to give a reckoning for his activities, and therefore he does not repent. who has a passionate lust for money and for forbidden women. 40 Alternatively, the subject of this phrase is Koheles, who says that he was so engrossed in his study "to know wisdom and to observe etc." that sleep eluded him. (Ibn Ezra)

Verse 17

And I saw all the works of God. That He gave over to mankind.
That man cannot discover, etc. Mankind is unable to fathom the ways of the Holy One, Blessed Is He, what the reward is for all the work that is done under the sun, for they see wicked men prospering and righteous men declining.
And though a man labor to seek. Because I saw many [people] toiling to seek and to fathom this matter, but they are unable.
And even though a wise man declares. That he understands it, he will not be able to, for Moshe our teacher could not comprehend this matter, 41 Even a wise man is unable to fathom the ways of God. (Metsudas Dovid) when he said, "please make Your way known to me." 42 Shemos 33:13.

Chapter 9

Verse 1

To make [all this] clear. And to clarify —
All this. I clarified and tested.
That the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God. He helps them and He judges them in order to benefit them in their end.
And their works. These are their students, their servants, who follow [in] their ways.
Whether it be love or hate. The rest of mankind neither knows nor perceives what would make them become beloved by the Omnipresent and what causes them to become hated. 1 Alternatively, man is unable to comprehend what inspires him to love or to hate. (Metsudas Dovid)
All is before them. Before the righteous and the wise. 2 Alternatively, all preceded them, i.e., all was decreed before they were born. (Ibn Ezra)

Verse 2

All things come alike to all. All perceive when the occurrence happens to all mankind, and they know that ultimately each person is recompensed according to his ways.
The same fate [awaits]. And [they] know that ultimately everyone, whether righteous or wicked, will die, and they all have one fate in this world. All this they know, but nevertheless, they choose for themselves the proper path, because they know that there is a distinction between them in the World to Come.
The righteous. Such as No'ach.
And the wicked. [Such as] Pharaoh Necho. This one became crippled, and that one [No'ach] became lame.
The good. This is Moshe. 3 Those who do good with others. (Metsudas Dovid)
And the pure. This is Aharon. 4 Those who have pure thoughts. (Metsudas Dovid)
And the impure. These are the spies; 5 Those who focus on impure thoughts and levity. (Metsudas Dovid) these spoke well in praise of the land of Yisroel, but those spoke derogatorily about it. Neither these entered the land, nor those entered the land, hence, they have the same fate.
To him who brings offerings. This is Yoshiyahu, as it is stated, "And Yoshiyahu offered a sacrifice." 6 II Divrei Hayomim 35:7. The reading of the text is, "And Yoshiyahu separated" [וירם יאשיהו] instead of "ויזבח יאשיהו." Rashi apparently did not have our version of the text.
And to him who does not bring offerings. This is Achav, who abolished [Bnei] Yisroel's festival pilgrimages [to the Beis Hamikdosh]. and that one [Yoshiyahu] was killed by arrows. 8 See I Melochim 22:34-35.
As is with the good man. This is Dovid.
So is it with the sinner. This is Nevuchadnetzar. This one [Dovid] built the Beis Hamikdosh, and that one destroyed it; this one reigned forty years, and that one reigned forty years.
As is with one who swears [easily]. This is Tzidkiyahu, who swore falsely, as it is stated, "And he also rebelled against King Nevuchadnetzar, who had made him swear, etc." 9 See II Divrei Hayomim 35:23-24.
So is it with the one who fears an oath. This is Shimshon, as it is stated, "And Shimshon said to them, 'Swear to me, that you, yourselves, will not strike me.'" 10 II Divrei Hayomim 36:13. We learn that he was strict in his observance of an oath. This one died after his eyes were gouged out, 11 Shoftim 15:12. and that one [Tzidkiyahu] died after his eyes were gouged out. 12 See Shoftim 16:21. Therefore—

Verse 3

The hearts of men are filled with evil. For they say that there is no judgment of retribution for the wicked. Everything is attributed to chance, [benefitting] sometimes the righteous, and sometimes the wicked. And afterwards they join the dead. And they ultimately descend to Gehinnom.

Verse 4

For to him that is joined to all the living, there is hope. For as long as he lives, even if he is wicked and he associates with the wicked, as it is stated, "to all the living," [including] even the wicked, there is hope that he will repent before his death. 13 See II Melochim 25:7. 14 For the lowliest person, as long as he is alive, can grow spiritually, whereas the wisest and most righteous who are dead cannot. (Metsudas Dovid)
For a live dog is better than a dead lion. And they are both wicked. It was better for Nevuzaradan, who was a wicked slave and became a

proselyte, that death did not overtake him sooner than Nevuchadnetzar, his master, who is called a "lion," as it is stated, "A lion has come up from his thicket," 15 The written text is יִבחַר [=will choose], to indicate that only those having the ability to choose have hope, but for the dead, being that they are unable to choose, all hope is lost. (Ibn Ezra) and who died in his wickedness, in Gehinnom, while his slave [Nevuzaradan] is in the Garden of Eden. Our Rabbis expounded upon this, that we may butcher a carcass for dogs on Shabbos, but a human corpse, lying in the sun, may not be moved unless one places a child or a loaf on it.

Verse 5

For the living know that they will die. And perhaps they will be mindful of the day of death, and they will repent of their ways, but once they die, they do not know anything, 16 Yirmiyahu 4:7. and they no longer earn reward for the actions 17 And even if they were to have perception, it is too late for them to repent. (Metsudas Dovid) that they do from their death and onwards, for "whoever toils on the eve of Shabbos will [have what to] eat on Shabbos." 18 Alternatively, וְאֵין לָהֶם עוֹד שָׂכָר כִּי נִשְׁכַּח זִכְרָם means "there is no reward for them, when [= כי] their memory is forgotten," i.e., when those who die leave no legacy of good deeds for others to follow. However, for the righteous who leave a legacy of good deeds for others to follow [i.e., their memory is not forgotten], there is further reward. (Kehilas Shlomo)

Verse 6

Also their love. That they loved folly and scorn.
[Also] their hate. That they hated knowledge.
[Also] their jealousy. That they provoked the Holy One, Blessed Is He, with their [evil] deeds. And a portion they will never again have, etc., in anything that is done, etc. The merit of a son or a daughter did not avail those wicked men who worshiped idols, and they have no atonement after death.

Verse 7

Go eat [your bread] in joy. But you, the righteous man, who the Holy One, Blessed Is He, has already accepted your good deeds and who will merit the World to Come, "go, eat [your bread] in joy." 19 See Maseches Avodah Zarah 3a.

Verse 8

At all times, let your garments be white. Prepare yourself at all times with good deeds, so that if you die today, you will enter [the Hereafter] in peace. And Shlomo likened this to a man whom the king invited for a day of feast, without setting a date for him. If he is wise or clever, he will immediately launder his garments, bathe, and anoint himself. 20 Koheles addresses the righteous man to "go eat your bread in joy." True happiness is achieved by eating "your own" bread that you have labored for, as indicated in Tehillim 128:2, "when you eat the labor of your hands you are praiseworthy and it is well with you." Also, be satisfied with life's basic necessities [represented by bread] without getting involved in life's luxuries. Mesilas Yeshorim in Chapter 15 states, that once food has been swallowed, its memory is forgotten as if it had never existed, and therefore enough black bread will satiate one to the same extent as fattened swans. And similarly [he will do] tomorrow until such time that he will be summoned to the feast, all this time his garments

are white 21 According to Targum, ושחן על ראשך refers to a good reputation, i.e., do not lack a good reputation. [=laundered] and he is bathed and anointed. So did our Rabbis expound it in Maseches Shabbos. 22 White garments were worn on festive occasions and are symbolic of purity.

Verse 9

See [to enjoy] life with the wife you love. See and understand to learn a skill by which to earn a livelihood, 23 153a. together with Torah study that you possess. 24 See Maseches Kiddushin 30b.
For that is your portion in life. If you have done so, your share will be life in this world, by earning a livelihood from the skill, and in the World to Come, because laboring in both [i.e., work and Torah study] causes sin to be forgotten. 25 Alternatively, אשה refers to one's soul [=נשמה]. (Alshich)

Verse 10

Whatever you are able to do. The will of your Maker— as long as you have your strength—do. 26 See Mishnayos Avos 2:2.
For there is neither deed, etc., in the grave. For your merit after you die, and if you did so, you have no reckoning in the grave to worry about. The [text of the] verse is transposed [meaning], "for there is neither deed nor knowledge nor wisdom in the grave for the wicked, 27 Alternatively, whatever charity and good deeds you are able to do, do them with all your strength. (Targum) nor reckoning for the righteous, when the wicked give an accounting and reckoning, and so is it expounded in the Midrash. And one who interprets it without transposing it, but according to its apparent meaning, interprets 'חֶשְׁבּוֹן' as an expression of "thought," what more can he still do 28 For them to use as an excuse for their sins. to exempt himself from judgment. 29 I.e., once one is in the grave, there is nothing more he can think of doing to exempt himself from judgment.

Verse 11

Again I saw. Like 'זָכוֹר'[=remebering continually], wedant in O.F.
The race is not to the swift. Isohel's swiftness 30 See II Shmuel 2:18. did not avail him when his time [to die] arrived. 31 His swiftness allowed him to catch up with Avneir, who killed him. See II Shmuel 2:23.
Nor the battle to the strong. Avner's might did not avail him when his day [to die] arrived.
Nor does bread [come] to the wise. For example, I, whose daily bread was "thirty kor of fine flour, etc.," 32 I Melochim 5:2. and now, "this [was] my portion [reward] from all my labor," 33 Above 2:10. Being wise is no guarantee for having food. Metsudas Dovid) my staff and my cup.
Nor riches to men of understanding. Such as Iyov. In the beginning, "His livestock consisted of, etc.," 34 Iyov 1:3. But when his time came, he said, "Have pity on me, you, my friends." 35 Ibid. 19:21. Alternatively, this phrase is connected with the preceding one. The reason that bread does not come to the wise is because wealth is not bestowed upon men of understanding, for if it were, they would share their wealth and provide the wise with bread so they would not lack anything. (Hafla'ah)
Nor favor to the learned. Referring to Moshe; there was no one more knowledgeable or wiser than he in Yisroel, and yet he did not find favor with his prayer to enter the land [of Yisroel]. 36 Alternatively, knowledge does not always earn only the acclaim of his fellow man.
For time and chance. [To be interpreted] as its apparent meaning. 37 Alternatively, "for time and death [=פגע] happen to them all." (Metsudas Tzion) Another explanation: "For time" will befall them, and to entreaty

and supplication they should be accustomed, that these things should not befall them.

Verse 12

As fish that are caught in a weak net. Like large fish that are caught in an inferior and weak net, and our Rabbis explained: This is a fishhook, which is no more than a type of needle, by which a large fish is caught. Like them, [men] are snared. With a small and weak trap, like the weak net and the snare. People stumble at the time of the visitation of their evil, when their time comes for evil to fall upon them suddenly, in an inferior trap, malweise in O.F.
Like them. Like them.

Verse 13

Verse 14

Verse 15

Yet no person remembered. No one attributed any importance to him.

Verse 16

And [yet] I said. When I saw this, "Wisdom is better than might," for this one's wisdom was despised by all, but now, they were all rescued through him.
The Midrash Aggadah [expounds as follows]: A small city. This is the body. 38 See Maseches Nedarim 32b.
With few men within it. These are the limbs of a person.
A mighty king. This is the evil inclination, which all his limbs feel.
A poor [wise] man. This is the good inclination.

Verse 17

Are received with pleasure. They are accepted by mankind. 39
Alternatively, the words of the wise [spoken] gently are heard, i.e., בנחת [gently] modifies דברי [the spoken words of the wise] as opposed to בנחת נשמעים [=are received with pleasure]. (Metsudas Dovid)
More than the shouts of a ruler of fools. Moshe passed away many years ago, yet his decrees are still accepted by Yisroel, and how many kings of the nations issue decrees over Yisroel, but their words do not endure.

Verse 18

Wisdom is better than weapons of war. The wisdom of Serach, of whom it is stated, "And the woman then went to [all] the people, in her wisdom," 40
Rashi apparently did not have כל in his version of the text. availed them more than the weapons that were in their hands, to wage war with Yo'av. 41 II Shmuel 20:22.
But one sinner destroys a multitude of good. Had she not slain Sheva the son of Bichri, they would all have been destroyed by him. 42
Alternatively, the wisdom of Yaakov was more effective than Eisav's weapons. (Midrash)
Another explanation: But one sinner destroys a multitude of good. If Yisroel were half of righteous people and half of wicked ones, and one

person came and sinned and made [the wicked] the majority, the result would be that he weighed them all down to be guilty. 43 Alternatively, when a wise man becomes a sinner, many people will abandon their pursuit of wisdom by concluding that this person's wisdom was of no avail. (Metsudas Dovid)

Chapter 10

Verse 1

Dead flies decay and pollute, etc. E.g., in the winter season, flies have no strength, and are near death; nevertheless, if it falls into a perfumer's oil and becomes mingled with the perfumes, it causes it to become putrid and it assumes a foam, which is called escume in O.F., and a sort of bubbles appears in it, and this is the meaning of 'יְבִיעַ.' So an insignificant thing 1 I.e., a fly. spoiled a precious thing. 2 I.e., the perfumer's oil. So does a little foolishness outweigh wisdom and honor, for it outweighed them all. Suppose that a man was equally divided with transgressions and merits, and he came and committed one transgression, which tipped the scale [causing him] to be guilty. The result is that this foolishness which is small, is heavy and weighs, and is heavier than all the wisdom and honor that he possessed, for behold, it outweighed them all.
[Are] outweighed. An expression of weight. It is heavy and weighs more than the wisdom that he possesses. The Midrash Aggadah [states], that [Scripture] compares the evil inclination to dying flies.
Decay and pollute. A good name, which is more pleasant than a perfumer's oil.

Verse 2

The heart [understanding] of a wise man is at his right hand. His wisdom will turn him onto the proper path for his benefit. 3 Alternatively, his intellect is always at hand when he needs it. (Metsudas Dovid)
But the heart of a fool is at his left. To drive him off the proper path, which is a glory and a comfort for him. 4 Alternatively, his intellect is not ready in time of need. (Metsudas Dovid)

Verse 3

And proclaims to all that he is a fool. By his walk and with his speech, everyone recognizes that he is a fool. 5 His actions make it so obvious, that it is as if he proclaims to all that he is a fool. (Ibn Ezra)

Verse 4

If the spirit [anger] of the Ruler. The Ruler of the Universe flares up against you, to scrutinize you with the Divine standard of justice.
Do not leave your place. Do not set aside your virtuous trait and say to Him, "Of what avail is my righteousness?"
For softness. The stringencies of the judgment with the afflictions that come upon you are a cure for your sins, and will relieve great sins for you.

Verse 5

Like an error emanating from the ruler. He is like a ruler who unintentionally let an error out of his mouth, and it is irrevocable. So

does the Holy One, Blessed Is He, speak, and [His decrees] cannot be retracted.

Verse 6

Folly is set upon great heights. This is the evil that is like an error which goes forth from before the ruler, that foolishness and wickedness are placed on the loftiest heights, for the Holy One, Blessed Is He, elevated the fools and the wicked, for I see with the Holy Spirit, that they are destined to extend their hand upon His Temple and to make "their signs for signs." 6 Tehillim 74:4. See also Maseches Gittin 56b.
But the rich sit in low places. Yisroel, for despite all the greatness and honor that they have now in my days, 7 Alternatively, this verse describes the evil that Koheles observes in the previous verse. The rich who are deserving of honor are ignored, while fools and slaves are elevated to high positions that they do not deserve. (Metsudas Dovid) they are destined to sit in a low place, as it is stated, "they sit on the ground, they are silent." 8 Eichah 2:10.

Verse 7

I have seen slaves on horses. These are the Chaldeans, about whom it is stated, "this nation never used to be," 9 Yeshayahu 23:13. will be elevated [to ride] on horses, leading Yisroel's captives, bound with neck irons.
Walking on foot like slaves on the ground. Before the Chaldean chariots.

Verse 8

He who digs a pit. גּוּמָּץ is] a pit.
Will fall into it. Sometimes he falls into it, i.e., sometimes you have a plotter of evil, and ultimately he is trapped by his own plot, for Nevuchadnetzar's seed was destroyed through the vessels of the Beis Hamikdosh, as it is stated, "you exalted yourself against the Lord of Heaven." 10 Daniyeil 5:23. The verse continues, "and the vessels of His House were brought before you, and you, your nobles, your consorts and your concubines drank wine from them, etc."
He who breaks down a fence. The fence [established] by the Sages, to transgress their ordinances. 11 The Gemara in Maseches Avodah Zarah 27b, applies this verse to those who break down the "fences" established via Rabbinic ordinances which serve to safeguard the Torah; such individuals "will be bitten by a snake," i.e., death at the hands of Heaven. The destruction caused by such people comes gradually without it being sensed and continuously grows. Its effect is similar to a snake's venom which continues to spread without realization until it results in death. See Mesilas Yeshorim Chapter 6.
Will be bitten by a snake. Death at the hands of Heaven, and because he spoke with an expression of breaking a fence, he mentions his recompense with an expression of the biting of a snake, 12 Alternatively, whoever breaks down a fence which acted as a barrier to protect others from being bitten, will himself be bitten. This theme is a repetition of the first phrase, "he who digs, etc," and continues into the next verse, to stress that these occurrences happen often. (Metsudas Dovid) who nestles in the cracks and holes of the walls of dilapidated houses.

Verse 9

He who removes stones will be hurt by them. One who quarries stones in the mountains will be fatigued by them.

Will be hurt. ‘יַעֲצֵב’ is an expression of weariness, as in, “with toil בְּעִצָּבוֹן shall you eat it,” 13 Bereishis 3:17. Alternatively, whoever scatters rocks to trip others, will himself be tripped and hurt by them. (Alshich) i.e., every man, his weariness is according to his work, so will the doer of evil reap according to what he sows.
Will be endangered by them. Shall be warmed by them, as in, “and she shall be to him a warmer 14 ”.סֹכֶנֶת I Melochim 1:2. So will one who engages in [the study of] Torah and in [the performance of] commandments ultimately benefit from them.

Verse 10

If the axe is blunt. Sharp swords, whose sharp edges have become dull. 15 The Gemara in Maseches Ta’anis 7b, applies this verse to the type of student to whom studies are hard as iron [=ברזל]. It attributes the reason for this problem is that he did not organize his studies properly [= והוא לא פנים קלקל]. His remedy is to exert more energy in his studies [=וחילים יגבר] and to spend more time in Yeshiva [=ויתרון הכשר חכמה].
And one has not sharpened its edge. And they are not sharpened and burnished, 16 קלקל is a double form of קלל, as in נחשת קלל [=burnished brass], in Yechezkeil 1:7. (Ibn Ezra) [as in,] “in order that they may glitter.” 17 Yechezkeil 21:15. The text in our editions reads למען היה לה ברק [=in order that it may glitter]. Nonetheless, it still strengthens the armies. It strengthens the mighty men of the armies in battle to be victorious.
There is more profit in a skill of wisdom. Wisdom has an additional advantage over iron, for if a Torah scholar’s face is blackened by hunger, and you see him as a poor man among the rich, [realize that] many armies are strengthened by him. Do not wonder about the vav of ‘וְחַיָלִים,’ for many vavin appear like that in the Hebrew language, as in, “If you saw a thief, you agreed וַתִּרֶץ with him,” 18 Tehillim 50:18. [and as in,] “The strength and the retribution of God was וַיְהִי to me a salvation,” 19 Shemos 15:2. Rashi there gives numerous examples of Scripture’s similar usage of the vav. and many [others] are similarly explained.

Verse 11

If the snake bites. A person.
Before it is charmed. Because the charmer did not charm it not to bite. There is no advantage. To the wicked charmer who was accustomed to charm it, if he did not charm it. So, if the people of your city [are unaware and] stumble over prohibitions because the wise man does not preach to them or teach them the statutes of the Torah, he has no advantage with his silence, and he will not benefit. 20 Alternatively, Koheles is comparing a slanderer to a charmer. A person who allows his tongue to slander is as guilty as a charmer whose snake killed someone because he did not prevent it from doing so. One’s slander often causes havoc and destruction, and sometimes even death. (Alshich) 21 See the Gemara in Maseches Arachin 15b, which applies this verse to a slanderer [= בעל לשון הרע].

Verse 12

The words of a wise man find favor. In the eyes of their listeners, and they listen to him, and it is good for him that he assumes greatness over them.
But lips of a fool devour him. This refers to someone who misleads his fellow man from the good way [to the bad way]; e.g., Bilam, who broke the restrictions that the nations had imposed, that they restricted themselves from immorality from the time of the generation of the flood

and onwards, yet, he advised them to offer their daughters for prostitution. 22 Alternatively, Targum renders, "the words of a wise man find favor," i.e., by his prayer he finds favor before God, Who removes the retribution destined to befall the world; "but the lips of a fool," are words of reproach and bring destruction to the world.

Verse 13

The beginning of his words is foolishness. When the Holy One, Blessed Is He, said to him [Bilam], "Who are these men with you?" 23 Bamidbar 22:9. he should have replied, "Adonoy, You know," but [instead] he said, "Balak son of Tzippor, king of Mo'av sent them to me," 24 Ibid., verse 10. i.e., though I may be despised in Your eyes, I am esteemed in the eyes of the earthly kings.
And the end of talk is [evil] madness. Madness and confusion [by advising], "Come I will counsel you" with foolish lewdness. 25 Alternatively, from beginning [=תחלת] to end [=ואחרית], a fool's statements are folly and madness. (Metsudas Dovid)

Verse 14

The fool multiplies words. For he [Bilam] was boasting that he, "knows the knowledge of the Most High." 26 Bamidbar 24:16.
Man knows not what will be. To him in the future, for he went to take his pay in Midyan, but he did not know that he would be killed by the sword. But according to its simple meaning: The fool multiplies words. He declares and says, "Tomorrow I will do this to so-and-so," without knowing what will be tomorrow. 27 Alternatively, although the fool multiplies his words, the listener nonetheless knows neither their meaning nor his intention. (Metsudas Dovid)
And what will be after him who can tell him. I.e., not only does he not know what will be after a time, but even what is presently now behind him, but is not in front of his eyes, only behind his back at a distance, he needs someone to tell him.

Verse 15

The labor of the fools exhausts them. Their foolishness causes them labor, 28 Fools busy themselves to understand profound and mysterious matters, when they lack comprehension of even simple matters. They are compared to those who wish to enter a city but do not know the way. They stumble and grow weary without achieving their goal. (Ibn Ezra) which wearies them, because they did not learn the ways of the approaches to the city, and he becomes weary by entering by way of pits and marshes, and he is wearied by his feet sinking into the mire; i.e., the laziness of those who abandon the Torah causes them wearying labor in Gehinnom.
For he does not know the way. To the path of truth, to part from transgression, 29 Alternatively, this phrase refers to an ignorant person who does not go to the city and learn from its wise people. (Targum) because he did not study Torah, as it is stated, "Your word is a lamp for my feet." 30 Tehillim 119:105.

Verse 16

Woe to you, O land if your king. When your king and your judges behave childishly.

Verse 17

In strength and not in drunkenness. They engage in the power of wisdom and understanding and not in drinking wine.

Verse 18

Where there is slothfulness the ceiling sags. When a person is lazy and does not repair a small breach in the ceiling of the house.
The ceiling sags. The structure and beams of the house will sag— and its covering.
Leaks. The dripping rain leaks, i.e., when [Bnei] Yisroel are lazy with [observance of] the Torah, 31 See Maseches Ta'anis 7b. they melt away, and the Beis [Hamikdosh], the pride of their strength, becomes destroyed and impoverished.

Verse 19

A feast is made for laughter. For the joy of the musical entertainment at a wedding, we make a feast, and an ordinary large feast is called 'לְעֻמָּם,' as it is stated, "King Belshatzar made a great feast 32 ".לְעֻמָּם Daniyeil 5:1.
And wine. They give to drink at the feast, that which makes life joyful.
And money answers all things. Without money, there is no feast; therefore, a person should not neglect work, so that he will have what to spend. 33 Alternatively, "money afflicts [=יענה'] all," i.e., either the abundance or lack of money causes affliction to mankind. Or, "money makes everyone respond [=יענה']," i.e., money causes people to readily listen and to obey.

Verse 20

Even in your thoughts [do not curse] the king. Even in your thoughts, without speech. "גַּם" means "even."
Do not curse the king. Do not provoke the King of the Universe. Another explanation: According to its apparent meaning, this is a mortal king.
A bird of the skies. The soul, which is placed within you, which will ultimately fly up to the heaven.
And that which has wings. The angel who escorts you, as the matter is stated, "For He will command His angels on your behalf," 34 Tehillim 91:11. and according to its apparent meaning, "those who go back and forth;" [i.e.,] you should worry about every person, perhaps there are listeners, who will tell [the matter] to others. 35 The Gemara in Maseches Bava Basra 4a states, that when Bava the son of Butta met with Hordos he applied this verse.

Chapter 11

Verse 1

Cast you your bread upon the waters. Do goodness and kindness to a person about whom your heart tells you that you will never see him again, 1 Do kindness without anticipating reciprocity from the receiver. (Sforno) Or, when giving charity, needy Torah scholars should be given priority. The Gemara in Maseches Bava Kamma 17a states that Torah is symbolized by water. Thus, when you "cast your bread," cast it first to the needy Torah Scholars. (Derech Hachayim) like a person who casts his food upon the water's surface. 2 Alternatively, also give charity to people you do not know. (Ibn Ezra)

For after many days you will find it. Days will yet come, and you will receive your recompense. 3 Alternatively, for you will find its reward in the World to Come. (Targum) Look what is stated about Yisro, "Call him and let him eat bread," 4 Shemos 2:20. and he thought that he [Moshe] was an Egyptian and that he would never see him again. What was the end? He became his son-in-law and reigned over Yisroel and [Moshe] brought him under the wings of the Divine Presence, and his sons and grandsons merited to sit in the Chamber of Hewn Stone.

Verse 2

Contribute to seven and even eight. If you shared your food and your drink with seven who need kindness, 5 Alternatively, when giving charity, give priority to the needy who are Shabbos observers [=לשבעה], symbolized by the seventh day of the week, Shabbos, over the needy who do not observe Shabbos; and give priority to Jews [=לשבעה], symbolized by the eighth day of circumcision], over non-Jews. (Derech Hachayim) share further with eight more who come after them, and do not say, "Enough." 6 The Rambam lists eight levels of charity, each higher than the other. The seventh [i.e., next to the highest level] is a person who gives charity to one whose identity he does not know, nor does the recipient know the identity of the donor. The highest [i.e., eighth] level, is supporting one by means of a gift, loan, partnership of providing work to an impoverished Jew. Alternatively, the verse means, "contribute on the seventh and eighth level [as prescribed by the Rambam]." (Alshich)
For you never know what calamity will come. Perhaps days will yet come and you will need [support from] them all. Then you will be saved from the evil by this charity, and if not now, when?
Our Rabbis, however, said— Contribute to, etc. These are the seven days of creation. Give one of them as a portion to your Creator, by resting on Shabbos. And even to eight. These are the eight days preceding circumcision.
Another explanation: Contribute to seven. The communal sacrifices of the seven days of Pesach. And even to eight. The eight days of the Festival [=Succos].
For you never know what calamity will come. If the Beis [Hamikdosh] will be destroyed, and you will no longer bring sacrifices, and the first sacrifices will avail to annul the evil decree.
Another explanation: For you never know what [calamity] will come. You do not know what has been decreed on the Festival regarding the rains, and the sacrifices will avail to annul evil decrees.

Verse 3

When the clouds are filled with rain. If you have seen clouds full of rain, you know that they will ultimately empty their rains upon the earth. In the place where the benefit grows and is discernible, there it is destined [for the rains] to come to rest. Likewise, you should know that "if a tree falls, etc.," [i.e.,] if a wise and righteous man 7 In Bamidbar 13:20, Rashi explains that a tree [עץ] is symbolizes a righteous man. See also the last Rashi on this verse below. resides in a city or in a province, the place where he resides, there his deeds will be discernible after his death, and his words of wisdom, exemplary traits and bestowal of goodness upon the inhabitants of that place by his good custom that he guided them on a straight road. 8 Alternatively, this verse is connected to the previous verse, i.e., a person blessed with wealth must share his fortune with the less fortunate in the same manner as clouds that are full of rain do not keep it for themselves but empty their rains upon the earth. (Metsudas Dovid)

Falls. Will reside, as in, “over all his brothers did he reside 9 ”.נָפַל Bereishis 25:18.
A tree. [Symbolic of] a Torah scholar, who with his merit protects like a tree, which serves as a covering over the earth.

Verse 4

He who watches [waits] for the wind. He who waits and looks forward for the wind to come. 10 שמר הרוח cannot means “watching” a wind, Rashi therefore explains that שומר הרוח means “waiting” for the wind. שומר is used in the same context in Bereishis 37:11, which states, “his father waited [שומר]” to see when Yoseif’s dream would be fulfilled. ( Sifsei Chachomim )
Will never sow. Sometimes he waits [for the wind], but it does not come. 11 According to Rashi, the farmer is waiting for the wind to come in order to sow his field, because he wants the wind to scatter his seeds. Alternatively, the farmer is afraid of the wind and does not sow because the wind will blow the seeds away. (Sforno)
And he who looks to the clouds. He observes the clouds, and when he sees them darkening, he is afraid to harvest on account of the rains; he will never harvest because he is always fearful [of the rains].

Verse 5

Just as you do not know, etc., nor the nature of that which is hidden in the womb of her that is with child. Things closed in and confined in the womb which is full, and even though it protrudes outward, “just as you do not know [the way of the wind].” This is a transposed verse, expounded from its end to its beginning. “Just as you do not know the way of the wind,” i.e., the knowledge of both these things is equal, neither is one revealed to you, nor is the other revealed to you, for sometimes you think that you know by the clouds that the wind will come, and it does not come here, but it passes and goes away to another land. This expression is similar to, “like the garden of Adonoy, like the land of Egypt,” 12 Bereishis 13:10. [and] “as with the maidservant, so with her mistress,” 13 Yeshayahu 24:2. [and] “as with the buyer so with the seller.” 14 Ibid. Sometimes it [Scripture] compares the former to the latter, and sometimes it compares the latter to the former. Here too, it teaches the knowledge of the wind from the knowledge of the womb, i.e., you should not await the wind by looking at the clouds. (Gloss: This matter is transposed in Rashi’s words, and it is in the opposite order. We must therefore, emend it as it is in exact editions, and then it will be understood well, and the following is the authentic version:
Just as you do not know. This is a transposed verse, explained from its end to its beginning: Just as you do not know the skeletal structure that is enclosed in the full womb, things that are closed and confined in the full womb, and even though it protrudes outward, you cannot fathom what is in her womb, 15 Just as you do not know whether the fetus is male or female until it emerges, so do you not know the working of God Who does everything with wisdom. (Targum) so do you not know the way of the wind, i.e., the knowledge of both these things is equal, etc. From the book Sifsei Chachomim.)
Nor the nature of that which is hidden. Enclosiede in O.F., as in, “and closes וְעוֹצֵם his eyes.” 16 Yeshayahu 33:15.
So you will never know, etc. Also the decrees of the Omnipresent in dealing with poverty and wealth are hidden from you, and you should not refrain from [doing] kindness because you are worried, “perhaps my wealth will diminish and I will become impoverished; I will [therefore] not engage in Torah [study] and neglect my work and become poor; I will not

wed and have children, because I will have to spend money to support them."

Verse 6

Therefore in the morning sow your seed, etc. If 17 See Maseches Yevamos 62a. your learned Torah in your youth, learn Torah in your old age. 18 Sow your field at all times and do not wait for the wind, "for you do not know which will prosper, and therefore if you learned etc." (Metsudas Dovid) If you had students in your youth, you should have students in your old age. If you married a childbearing woman in your youth, you should marry a childbearing woman in your old age. If you performed charitable acts in your youth, perform charitable acts in your old age. For you do not know which will prosper. Whether the students and children of your youth will survive you, or perhaps only those of your old age will survive. We find 19 See Maseches Yevamos 62b. that Rabbi Akiva had twenty-four thousand students from Gabas to Antiparis, and they all died between Pesach and Shavuos, and he came to our Sages in the south and taught them. And concerning children, we find that Ivzan "sent thirty daughters abroad, and he brought in thirty daughters for his sons," 20 Shoftim 12:9. and they all died in his lifetime, 21 See Maseches Bava Basra 91a. but in his old age, he begot Oveid, who survived him.

Verse 7

And the light is sweet. The light of Torah is sweet. 22 In Tehillim 19:11, Dovid describes the Torah as "sweeter than honey and drippings from the combs."
And it is good [pleasant] for the eyes to behold the sun. And fortunate are the students whose eyes see a legal opinion whitened and clarified thoroughly. So is it expounded in Aggadas Tehillim.

Verse 8

Let him rejoice in all of them. Let him be happy with his lot, provided that he remembers the days of darkness and improve his deeds so that he be saved from them; and these are the days of eternal death, they are the days of the wicked.
For they will be many. In those days, more than the days of life. 23 I.e., the days of darkness, when he will be in his grave, will be many more than the days of his life. (Metsudas Dovid)
All that comes. Upon him will be punishment and darkness. "הֶבֶל" sometimes is an expression of punishment and troubles, as in, "for he [the stillborn child] comes with troubles הֶבֶל and departs in darkness." 24 Above 6:4.

Verse 9

Rejoice young man in your youth. As a person who says to his servant or to his child, "Persist in your sinning, but [realize] you will be punished in one blow for all [your sins]." Here too, the wise man says, "Rejoice, young man in your youth... follow the ways of your heart," but be assured "that for all these things," the Judge "will bring you to judgment." 25 Alternatively, the Gemara in Maseches Shabbos 21b states that what is learned in the years of childhood is remembered more readily. This is the time period that one has no distractions or troubling thoughts. (Sforno)

Verse 10

Therefore banish anger. [Banish] anything that causes anger to the Omnipresent.
And remove evil. The evil inclination.
From your flesh. That you should have a heart of flesh. 26 Alternatively, if your flesh desires to indulge in anything that is evil, remove those desires from your flesh. (Metsudas Dovid)
And youth. שַׁחֲרוּת refers to] youth, because [the hair on] a person's head is black שָׁחוֹר in his youth. 27 Alternatively, שחר [=dawn] refers to youth which is the dawn of one's life.

Chapter 12

Verse 1

So remember your Creator. There 1 Mishnayos Avos 3:1. we learned, Akavya the son of Mahalalel says, reflect upon three things, etc. And he expounded it from this verse, "so remember your Creator [=בּוֹרְאֶךָ," that you will give an accounting and reckoning before Him; and remember your pit, your grave [=בּוֹרֶךָ, a place of earth, maggots, and worms; and remember your well [=בְּאֵרֶךָ, the well that flows from its source, that is, the putrid drop of semen and whiteness.
The evil days. The days of old age and feebleness. 2 The days of old age are referred to as "evil days" because it is more difficult to serve God in those days than it is during one's youth. (Metsudas Dovid)

Verse 2

Before the darkening of the sun. Our Rabbis said that this שֶׁמֶשׁ refers to the forehead, which gives light and shines on a young man, 3 See Rashi in Maseches Shabbos 151b. but as he grows older, it becomes wrinkled and does not shine. 4 Alternatively, before becoming ill and bedridden. (Metsudas Dovid)
The light. This refers to the nose, which is the form of the face's features.
The moon. This refers to the soul, which provides a person with light, once it is taken away from him, his eyes cease to have light.
And the stars. These refer to the cheeks, the pomegranates of the face, called pomels [in O.F.] of the cheeks, which shine.
And the clouds return after the rain. The dimming of the light follow the tears of weeping for the many troubles that he experienced. 5 Alternatively, he returns to his weakness following a brief recovery. (Metsudas Dovid)

Verse 3

Trembling. Trembling.
The preservers of the house. These refer to the ribs and flanks, that protect the entire body's cavity. 6 Alternatively, these refer to the hands and arms. (Metsudas Dovid)
Will be bent. Will be seized by cramps עִוּוּת, called crampe [in O.F.].
Will be seized with cramps [=וְהִתְעַוְּתוּ is encranpiront in O.F.
The strong men. These refer to the legs, upon which the entire body is supported.
And the grinders cease. These refer to the teeth.
Because they are few. In old age, most of his teeth fall out.
And the starers in the windows. These refer to the eyes.

Verse 4

And the doors [to the street] will be shut. These refer to his orifices.
When the sound of the grinding is low. The sound of the mill grinding the food in his intestines, and that refers to the stomach.
And when one will awaken at the sound of a bird. For even the voice of a bird awakens him from his sleep once he has become old.
And muffled will be the daughters [sounds] of song. All the sounds of musical instruments seem to him like conversation. Its apparent meaning is its simple interpretation, 'יִשַּׁחוּ' is like יִשָּׁפְלוּ [=will be brought low]. All the singers and songstresses will be low in his eyes, and as Barzily of Gilad said to Dovid, "or can I still listen to the voice of singers and songstresses?" 7 II Shmuel 19:36.

Verse 5

Also when they will fear heights. From the mounds and bumps in the streets; [i.e.,] he is afraid to go outdoors because he might stumble on them. 8 Alternatively, they fear heights because they feel that they do not have the energy to climb them. (Ibn Ezra)
And terrors on the road. The road's many fears and terrors.
Terrors. This is a word is of a doubled language, as in גַּלְגַּלִּים [=wheels], קַשְׁקַשִּׁים [=scales], זַלְזַלִּים [=tendrils].
[And the almond tree] will blossom. וְיָנֵאץ is] an expression of, "the pomegranates have blossomed 9 ",הֵנֵצוּ Shir Hashirim 7:13. for the 'aleph' in it is silent. Our Rabbis said, this is the haunch, hanche in O.F., into which the hip bone is thrust, and in his old age, the flesh becomes thin and the bone protrudes, like when a tree blossoms, it protrudes. 10 See Rashi in Maseches Shabbos 152a.
The almond tree. An almond tree, i.e., old age will spring upon him just like this almond tree, which hastens to blossom before all the other trees.
And the grasshopper will be a burden. These are the buttocks, for his buttocks will seem to him to be as one who bears a heavy burden. 11 Alternatively, if a grasshopper alights upon him, he will feel it as a burden. (Metsudas Dovid)
Will be a burden. Ed ert sorfeisiez in O.F.
And the desire will fail. The desire for women; for he will have no need to be intimate with women. 'אֲבִיוֹנָה' [means] desire, 12 Alternatively, and understanding [האביונה=בינה] will fail. (Metsudas Dovid) as in, "But you did not desire 13 ",אֲבִיתֶם Devarim 1:26. [and as in,] "I yearned תָּאַבְתִּי for Your salvation." 14 Tehillim 119:174.

Verse 6

Before the snapping of the silver cord. This refers to the spinal cord, which is as white as silver, and when he dies, its marrow diminishes and empties out and dries, and it becomes crooked within the vertebrae, becoming like a chain. יֵרָתֵק is an expression of "silver chains" 15 Yeshayahu 40:19. רְתָקוֹת.
And the golden bowl is shattered. This is the male member, that emits a flow of water and flows like a fountain, 16 Alternatively, "the golden bowl" refers to the brain. (Metsudas Dovid) as in, "the upper springs 17 ".גֻּלּוֹת Yehoshua 15:19. 'וְתָרֵץ' is an expression of shattering. 18 As in "They broke and cursed [וירצצו]," in Shoftim 10:8. (Metsudas Dovid)
And the pitcher is broken at the fountain. This refers to the stomach, 19 Alternatively, "the pitcher" refers to the gall bladder. (Metsudas Dovid) which is thick and cracks upon his death.
And the wheel is shattered into the pit. The eyeball will be shattered within its socket. But according to its simple interpretation, this is a wheel with which they draw water from the cistern. So is this entire

matter expounded in Maseches Shabbos. 20 151b-152a. But Midrash Kinos interprets it [i.e., verses 1-6 above] as referring to all Yisroel [as follows]: So remember your Creator in the days of your youth. As long as your youthfulness still endures, as long as the priesthood still endures, as it is stated, "And [I did] choose him from among all the tribes of Yisroel to be a Kohen to Me," 21 I Shmuel 2:28. as long as [the covenant with] the Levyim still endures, as it is stated, "For Adonoy your God has chosen him from among all your tribes," 22 Devarim 18:5. as long as the kingship of the House of Dovid still endures, as it is stated, "And He chose Dovid, His servant," 23 Tehillim 78:70. as long as Yerusholayim still endures, about which it is stated, "the city that I have chosen," 24 I Melochim 11:32. as long as the Beis [Hamikdosh] still endures, about which it is stated, "And now I have chosen and sanctified this House," 25 II Divrei Hayomim 7:16. [and] as long as you still endure, as it is stated, "and Adonoy has chosen you." 26 Devarim 14:2.
Before the evil days come. These are the days of the exile.
Before the darkening of the sun. This is the kingdom of the House of Dovid of which it is stated, "And his throne [shall be] like the sun before Me." 27 Tehillim 89:37.
The light. This refers to the Torah, as it is stated, "For a commandment is a lamp, and the Torah is light." 28 Mishlei 6:23.
The moon. This refers to the Sanhedrin, of which we learned, "[The seating of] the Sanhedrin was in the shape of a semi-circular threshing floor." 29 Mishnayos Sanhedrin 4:3.
And the stars. These refers to the Rabbis, as it is stated, "and those who teach righteousness to the multitudes [will shine] like the stars." 30 Daniyeil 12:3.
And the clouds return after the rain. One calamity after another. You find concerning all the harsh prophecies that Yirmiyahu prophesied, that they only befell them after the destruction of the Beis [Hamikdosh].
In the day when trembling prevails over the preservers of the house. These refer to the watches of the Kohanim and the Levyim.
And the strong men will be bent. These refer to the Kohanim, who are mighty in strength. Rabbi Abba the son of Kahana said, that Aharon lifted twenty-two thousand Levyim in one day. Rabbi Chanina said, that the bird's crop is a light thing, yet the priest would throw it more than thirty cubits. 31 A great deal of power is needed to throw a light thing more than thirty cubits. ( Sifsei Chachomim )
And the grinders cease. These refer to the great collections of Mishnah, [e.g.,] the Mishnah of Rabbi Akiva, the Mishnah of Rabbi Chiya, and the Mishnah of the son of Kappara.
And the starers [in the windows] are dimmed. That the Talmud will be forgotten from the heart.
And the doors to the street will be shut. For example, the doors of Nechushta the son 32 It seems that Nechushta was the daughter of Elnasan. See II Melochim 24:8. The doors of her house were always open to offer hospitality. of Elnasan, which were wide open [for guests].
When the sound of the grinding is low. Because they did not engage in Torah study. Rabbi Shmuel said, that Yisroel is compared to the grinding of the millstones; just as the millstones are idle neither by day nor by night, here too, [it states,] "you shall meditate therein day and night." 33 Yehoshua 1:8.
And one will awaken at the sound of a bird. This is the wicked Nevuchadnetzar. Rabbi Levi said, that for eighteen years a heavenly voice would go forth and scatter in Nevuchadnetzar's palace and proclaim, "Wicked slave, go and destroy your Master's House [i.e., the Beis Hamikdosh,] because His children disobey Him."
And muffled will be the daughters [sounds] of song. "They shall not drink wine with song." 34 Yeshayahu 24:9.

Also when they will fear heights. Of He Who is Supreme in the universe, [Nevuchadnetzar] was afraid, and his heart was concerned lest He do to him as He did to his predecessors.
And terrors on the road. Because of this, he will seek signs and omens [to determine if] he will succeed on the way that he will go, as the matter is stated, "For the king of Bavel stood at the crossroads... to divine; he shot the arrows, he inquired of the teraphim." 35 Yechezkeil 21:26.
And the almond tree will blossom. Yirmiyahu's prophecy will sprout, as it is stated, "I see a staff of an almond tree." 36 Yirmiyahu 1:11. Rabbi Eliezer said, this almond tree, from the time it blossoms until its fruits ripen, are twenty-one days. Likewise, from the seventeenth of Tammuz until the ninth of [Menachem] Av are twenty-one days.
And the grasshopper will be a burden. This refers to Nevuchadnetzar's graven image; "its height was sixty cubits [and] its width six cubits." 37 Daniyeil 3:1. Now, if its thickness is only six, it cannot stand, and you say that, "he set it up in the plain of Dura"? 38 Ibid.. Rav Bibi said, they kept on setting it up and it kept on falling, until they brought all the gold of Yerusholayim and poured it out as a base on its feet, to fulfill what is stated, "and their gold will be repugnant." 39 Yechezkeil 7:19.
And the desire will fail. This refers to ancestral merit; the support of your Patriarchs will fail; accordingly, 'הָאֶבְיוֹנָח' is derived from 'אָב' [=father].
For [in this manner] man goes. [This refers to] Yisroel, who were called "the people, like sheep;" 40 Ibid. 36:37. The beginning of the phrase is, "I will relate to the inquiries of the House of Yisrael, to act for them; I will multiply them, the people, like sheep." [and] "you are Man." 41 Ibid. 34:31. The beginning of the verse is, "Now, you are My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are Man."
To his eternal home. They came from Bavel, and they returned to Bavel. Terach, the father of Avrohom, was from the other side of the river.
And the mourners go about the streets. The exile of Yechonyah preceded the exile of Tzidkiyah by eleven years. When Nevuchadnetzar exiled Tzidkiyahu['s captives] in neck irons, the exiles of Yechonyah came out toward Nevuchadnetzar against their will, with the rest of the city's citizens, to praise him, that he was a hero and a victor; and they would see the captives and each would inquire about his kinsman, what happened to him, they would answer them, "those who are [destined] for death, to death, and those who are [destined] for captivity, to captivity, and those who are [destined] for the sword, to the sword." 42 Yirmiyahu 15:2. The text in our editions have a different sequence than the one offered by Rashi. Our editions read "...those who are [destined] for death, to death; those who are [destined] for the sword, to the sword; those who are [destined] for hunger, to hunger; and those who are [destined] for captivity, to captivity." They would praise with one hand, and with their other hand, they would clap and beat their sides in mourning for their brothers and their children.
Before the snapping of the silver cord. This refers to the genealogical chain.
And the golden bowl is shattered. These are the words of Torah, as it is stated, "They are to be desired more than gold." 43 Tehillim 19:11.
And the pitcher is broken at the fountain. The pitcher of Baruch the son of Neiriyah 44 I.e., pitcher [=כד] is referring to Baruch the son of Neiriyah. on the fountain of Yirmiyahu. 45 I.e., fountain [=מבוע] is referring to Yirmiyahu. In the Midrash there is also an opposite view, that מבוע refers to Baruch the son of Neiriyah, and כד refers to Yirmiyahu. The difference of opinion hinges upon the question of who was exiled first. A pitcher is not broken unless the fountain has dried up first; מבוע therefore represents the one who was first to be exiled.

(Torah Temimah) For they were both exiled to Bavel and interrupted their studies because of the journey's hardship. At first, they were exiled to Egypt, for Yochanan the son of Kare'ach exiled them, but when Nevuchadnetzar destroyed Egypt, he exiled them to Bavel.
And the wheel is shattered into the pit. This is Bavel, which is the world's depository. 46 Bavel serves as the world's depository because it is situated lower than all its surrounding land. Probably on account of this, the Gemara in Maseches Zevachim 113b states that the dead of the Flood were shaken out there. Also, the Gemara in Maseches Ta'anis 10a states that Bavel does not require rain because it is swampy and never dries out being that its land is situated so low.

Verse 7

And the dust returns, etc. They came from Bavel and they returned to Bavel. 47 Alternatively, referring to the body, for God created Adam from dust. The body will return to the earth and turn into dust as it was originally. (Metsudas Dovid)
And the spirit returns. This is the Holy Spirit, for as soon as the Holy Spirit departed, they were exiled.

Verse 8

Vanity of vanities. I see in the world.
Says Koheles. He who had a collection of wisdom within him. 48 See Rashi above 7:27 for an explanation why "קהלת" which is a feminine noun is sometimes used in the masculine form.
All is vanity. All that was created during the six days of creation.

Verse 9

And besides that Koheles was wise. More than what is written in this book" 49 Alternatively, "In addition to his virtue of being a wise man, Koheles also taught others and made them wise." (Metsudas Dovid) Koheles was more [=יותֵר] wise.
He weighed. He made handles 50 I.e., ears [אזן]. See Maseches Eruvin 21b. Alternatively, "ואזן" means, "he let them hear." (Metsudas Dovid) for the Torah, like a basket which has no handles with which to grasp it, and he came along and made handles for it, 51 By applying "handles" to various mitzvos, he made it easier to grasp them, in the same manner as it is easier to grasp a utensil with handles than one that is without handles. ( Sifsei Chachomim ) for he instituted "eruvin" as a safeguard for the observance of the Shabbos, and the ritual washing of the hands as a safeguard for purity, and he instituted secondary forbidden marriages as a safeguard for the prohibitions against incest.

Verse 10

Koheles sought. He set his heart and sought the matter and found it.
Words of delight. The law [as it was given] to Moshe at Sinai. 52 The Gemara in Rosh Hashannah 21b expounds this verse, that Koheles sought to be like Moshe. A heavenly voice emerged and said, "and to write in a proper way [=וכתוב ישר] words of truth [דברי אמת];" and in Devarim 34:10 it states, "and no prophet has there arisen in Yisroel like Moshe." Another name for Devarim is ספר הישר which is alluded to [וכתוב ישר] in this verse. (Maharsha)
And to write in a proper way. This refers to the written Torah and the Prophets.

Verse 11

The words of the wise. They made a "fence" for the Torah with [various] decrees in order to distance a person from sin, e.g., eating hallowed things [is permitted] until dawn, but they declared "[only] until midnight," and likewise, the evening recitation of Shema. 53 See Mishnayos Berachos 1:1.
Are like goads. Just as this goad directs the cow to its furrows, so do their words direct a person to the ways of life.
Like well-fastened nails. Just as this nail is permanent, so are their words permanent, and just as a sapling is fruitful and multiplies, so are their words fruitful and multiply, to find a reason for them.
Of the masters of [learned] assemblies. Nails that have a large and thick head, grose in O.F. So did Dunash the son of Labrat explain it.
All were given from one Shepherd. All their words are the words of the living God, He said them; and one shepherd 54 The acronym of משה רבנו עליו השלום is מרעה [=from one shepherd], and that is why מרעה is spelled without a vav. ( Sifsei Chachomim ) gave them, Moshe from the Almighty.
Like [well fastened] nails. This is written with a sin, for the Torah, with its twenty-four books coincides with the number of the watches of the Kohanim and the Levyim.

Verse 12

And furthermore my son be admonished. More than the uprightness of the words of truth, the words written in the aforementioned books.
My son be admonished. To observe the words of the Sages. Now if you ask, "If they are necessary, why were they not written down?"
Of making many books there is no end. If we would attempt to write, we would be unable to do so. 55 See Rashi in Maseches Eruvin 21b. The sages did not write in the books all that one should be observing, because "there is no end," i.e., it would be impossible to write everything in books.
And much study wears away the flesh. And if he attempts to meditate 56 Rashi understands that ולהג is like ולהגות, i.e., to meditate, from the root הגה, and the lamed is not part of the root. ( Sifsei Chachomim ) in large amounts [of Torah study], more than the heart can grasp, that is weariness to mankind that is not attainable, but let one not say, "Since I cannot complete the work, why should I begin?" But —

Verse 13

In conclusion after all has been heard, fear God. Do what you can, and let your heart be [directed] toward Heaven. 57 Alternatively, the Gemara in Maseches Berachos 6b expounds this verse, that if one is filled with fear of God [=ירא את האלקים], his words are listened to [הכל נשמע]. Or, everything a person does is heard before God [הכל נשמע] and nothing is concealed from Him, therefore fear God [=ירא את האלקים], and observe His commandments [ואת מצותיו שמור]. (Metsudas Dovid)
And preserve His commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man. Because, for this purpose [only], the entire man was created.

Verse 14

For every deed. That a person performs, God will bring to judgment. 58 Just as God does not allow any good deed, small as it may be, to go without reward, so too, He does not permit any bad deed, however small, to go without judgment. (Mesilas Yeshorim) Therefore, מַעֲשֶׂה is vowelized with a patach, and the cantillation sign is above, 59 I.e., the cantillation sign indicates a slight pause, separating it from the word that follows. ( Sifsei Chachomim ) since it is not connected to "God." 60

For every deed, God will bring to the great Judgment Day, and He will publicize it to all mankind whether good or bad. (Targum)
And every hidden thing. Even for the unintentional sin. 61 Alternatively, man's intention which is hidden from others, God will bring into judgment. (Metsudas Dovid)
Whether good or bad. Even if he stumbled in a commandment, 62 Mesilas Yeshorim in Chapter 3 cites the Gemara in Maseches Eruvin 13b, that man should "examine" [יפשפש] his deeds; others say that he should "feel" [ימשמש] his deeds. He explains that the former [יפשפש] refers to examining actions which are not in accordance with God's commandments and they should be eliminated. The latter [ימשמש] refers to investigating the good actions to determine any aspects of them which are not good and they should be removed. e.g., giving charity to the poor in public. 63 The Gemara in Maseches Chagigah 5a criticizes one who gives charity to a poor person in public, because it is an act which may shame him. And that is the meaning why even a good deed, "God will bring into judgment." ( Sifsei Chachomim ) 64 The numerical value [gematria] of the last four words of Koheles, אם טוב ואם רע [=whether good or bad], is equal to 375, the same gematria as its author שלמה [=375]. Also, Koheles begins with a daled and ends with an ayin, alluding to I Divrei Hayomim 28:9 where Dovid instructs his son Shlomo, "Know [דע] the God of your father and serve him." In conclusion after all has been heard, fear God, etc.